TRANSFORMERS
MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

VOLUME 7

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Special thanks to Hasbro's Clint Chapman, Heather Hopkins, Jerry Jivoin, Joshua Lamb, Ed Lane, Mark Weber, and Michael Kelly for their invaluable assistance.

9781623027698 DIGITAL

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Originally published as THE TRANSFORMERS: MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE issues #34–38.

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PARDON?

SORRY, MAINFRAME, I WAS READING. ALL I HEARD WAS "*WARP GATES*."

BLUESTREAK WAS ASKING ABOUT THE *SKY*, AND I WAS SAYING THERE WAS THIS HUGE BATTLE—UP THERE, IN ORBIT, AND DOWN HERE.

SOMETHING TO DO WITH A DERELICT SHIP.

IT'S ALL OVER THE LOCAL NEWSFEED—THIS MASSIVE THREE-WAY BETWEEN THE *GALACTIC COUNCIL*, *THE BLACK BLOCK CONSORTIA*, AND A BUNCHA MECHS.

WARP GATES EVERYWHERE—AND THEY TAKE *FOREVER* TO FADE.

WHAT ARE YOU *LIKE*, TRAILCUTTER? A SUNRISE AS EPIC AS *THAT* AND YOU'VE GOT YOUR HEAD STUCK IN A *BOOK*!

IT'S *TOWARDS PEACE*, MEGATRON'S OPUS. IT'S BEEN ON MY *READ LIST* FOR AGES. THE *OLD ME* NEVER FOUND THE TIME—TOO THIRSTY.

I'M STILL HOLDING OUT FOR THE *FILM VERSION*. "*PART AUTOBIOGRAPHY... PART POLITICAL TREATISE... ALL MEGATRON.*"

"CONTAINS SCENES OF MILD GENOCIDE."

GIVE US A LOOK.

"*POSTWAR EDITION*"? DON'T TELL ME—THERE'S A NEW CHAPTER AT THE END! *IGNORE EVERYTHING I JUST SAID.*"

KIND OF... THEY'VE ADDED SOME FOOTAGE OF HIM ON *LUNA 2*, TELLING THE CONS TO *STAND DOWN*.

I'VE JUST GOT TO THE END OF *THE MESSATINE YEARS*. VERY UNEVENTFUL—LOTS OF DIGGING FOR NUCLEON, BASICALLY.

THIS'LL BE THE GOOD DOCTOR. I BET HE'S LOST.

"WHY DID YOU LET ME GO EXPLODING?"

BZZZZZ

HI, *FIRST AID*.

BEFORE YOU ASK, STILL NO SIGN OF *RODIMUS*.

HE'S PROBABLY TIED UP DEALING WITH THE SAME PROBLEMS WE HAD: PEOPLE DISAPPEARING, SHUTTLES DISAPPEARING, PEOPLE FLOATING IN SPACE...

WHERE *ARE* YOU, ANYWAY?

THE TAMIZDAT LECTURE THEATER.
10 MINUTES LATER.

SO WHO IS HE?

HE'S *CYBERTRONIAN*. HE'S BEEN *SCORCHED*, AND HE'S *FADING FAST*. BEYOND THAT, YOUR GUESS IS AS GOOD AS MINE...

HIS BADGE MUST'VE BEEN BURNED OFF. MAN, HE'S *REALLY* MESSED UP.

YOU KNOW WHO DID THIS? THE COUNCIL.

THE COUNCIL OR THE CONSORTIA.

SMASHED UP THIS THEATER — SMASHED UP THIS WHOLE CAMPUS.

MONSTERS.

MAYBE HE DOESN'T EVEN *HAVE* A BADGE. MAYBE HE'S *NON-AFFILIATED*.

MAYBE IT'S *IRRELEVANT*. HE'S HURT, WE HELP. DID YOU BRING THE SUPPLIES?

THEY'RE OUTSIDE, WITH TRAILCUTTER. WE LOADED HIM UP WITH EVERYTHING THAT LOOKED VAGUELY MEDICAL.

ARE YOU GETTING AN *AUTOBOT VIBE*, OR A *DECEPTICON VIBE*?

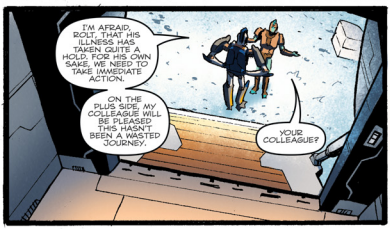
I DUNNO. IT'D HELP IF WE KNEW WHAT HE TURNS INTO. BUT I CAN'T EVEN WORK OUT WHICH BITS ARE *ALT MODE SPECIFIC*.

...

I'VE GOT AN IDEA.

MESSATINE. LONG AGO.
"SAFE JOURNEY?"
LONG JOURNEY— LONGER THAN EXPECTED.
YOU COULDN'T HAVE SET UP A MINING OUTPOST CLOSER TO HOME?
ONLY ONE LEFT IS CROTEUS 12. AND I HEAR THAT'S ABOUT TO BE AUTOMATED.
I'M ROLT, BY THE WAY. HEAD OF INSTALLATION. AND YOU MUST BE...?
FROID. CHIEF PSYCHOPATHOLOGIST.
CHIEF. EH?
WHEN THE SENATE CALLED TO SAY THEY WERE SENDING SOMEONE, I DIDN'T REALIZE IT WAS THEIR NUMBER ONE BUY.
THEY WANT THIS HANDLED PROPERLY NOW. DID YOU PREPARE THE...?
HERE. EVERYTHING WE'VE GOT ON HIM: ENERGON CONSUMPTION, PRODUCTIVITY RATES, SHIFT PATTERNS...
MIGHT BE A BIT DRY FOR YOUR TASTES.
HIMM.
HE WORKS HARD, IF THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE.
INCREDIBLY HARD. AND HE'S QUIET.

"HE'S WHAT YOU MIGHT CALL A *THINKER*."



WHAT HAVE YOU *DONE*?!

YOU *MOVED* HIM!

WHY DID YOU MOVE HIM?

YOU SHOULD *NEVER* MOVE A LEAKER! NOT WITHOUT A DOCTOR PRESENT!

UH... YEAH. HE DOES SEEM TO BE IN SOME DISCOMFORT.

Hu-Hu-Hu-Hu

AW GUYS, I KNOW YOU MEANT WELL, BUT YOU'VE MADE IT *WORSE*.

HE HAD *HOURS*, NOW HE'S GOT *MINUTES*!

WHY DID YOU MOVE HIM...?

I DON'T KNOW, I—

THOUGHT I MIGHT FIND HIS BADGE...?

BUT WHY? THE WAR'S *OVER*. IT DOESN'T MATTER IF HE'S A DECEPTICON, DOES IT?

S'POSE NOT.

AND EVEN IF HE *WAS* A CON, WHAT WOULD YOU DO, *WITHHOLD TREATMENT?* BECAUSE C'MON, BLUE—THAT'S *NEVER* BEEN AN OPTION, NOT EVEN IN WARTIME.

HE NEEDS AN EMERGENCY TRANSFUSION.

ENERGON?

AH, THE HARD STUFF.

ACTIVE ENERGON, READY: CIRCULATED DIRECT FROM THE DONOR.

EIGHT FLUID DRAMS SHOULD BE ENOUGH TO SAVE HIM. WE'LL DONATE TWO EACH.

ER—DO WE GET A CHOICE? TWO DRAMS IS TWO DRAMS.
AND ISN'T THERE A RISK OF SPARK FAILURE IF YOU DONATE TOO MUCH TOO QUICKLY?
SPARK FAILURE OR BRAIN DAMAGE?
I HEARD THERE WAS A RISK.
THERE'S NO RISK.
...
OKAY, SO THERE MIGHT BE A RISK. BUT TWO DRAMS IS NOTHING.
?
ER, QUESTION...? WHAT KIND OF CYBERTRONIAN...
...HAS A REMOVABLE FACE?

IN A SOCIETY BUILT AROUND A GRAND CYBERTRONIAN TAXONOMY THAT IS OBSESSIVELY REVISED AND REINTERPRETED, THE ONE THING THAT NEVER CHANGES—THE ONE THING THAT MUST NEVER CHANGE—IS THE SYSTEM ITSELF. EVERY REVISION, EVERY REINTERPRETATION TAKES PLACE WITHIN A RIGID FRAMEWORK OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION. NOTHING MUST THREATEN THE FUNCTIONISTS' CORE PHILOSOPHY: UTILITY AS AN ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE.

IF YOU COULD STEP OUTSIDE THE SYSTEM YOU WOULD RECOGNIZE IT FOR WHAT IT IS: A PRISON. WORSE THAN THAT, IT IS A PRISON FULL OF WILLING PRISONERS. AND NOT ONLY ARE YOU A PRISONER WITHIN THE SYSTEM, YOU ARE A PRISONER WITHIN YOUR OWN BODY. WHETHER YOU WERE BORN OR MADE, FORGED OR CONSTRUCTED COLD, YOU ARE TRAPPED INSIDE YOUR ALT MODE. THE FUNCTIONISTS BUILT THE LOCK AND THE SENATE HOLDS THE KEY; BUT MOST OF US ARE UNAWARE THAT WE'RE LOCKED IN.

MAKE NO MISTAKE: YOUR LIFE IS MAPPED OUT IN FRONT OF YOU, AS CLEAR AS THE GROOVES IN YOUR TRANSFORMATION COG. YOU CAN NO MORE CHOOSE TO CHANGE JOBS THAN CYBERTRON CAN CHOOSE TO STOP ORBITING THE SUN. YOU CAN NO MORE ACQUIRE A SKILL UNRELATED TO YOUR VOCATION THAN THE SKY CAN ACQUIRE A CONSCIENCE.

IN DENYING YOU THE ABILITY TO REJECT YOUR ALT MODE—IN PREVENTING YOU FROM PURSUING A PATH OF YOUR OWN CHOOSING—BOTH THE SENATE AND THE COUNCIL SAY THEY ARE ACTING IN YOUR BEST INTERESTS. THEY HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY, THEY SAY, TO ENSURE THAT YOU MAKE BEST USE OF YOUR GOD-GIVEN FORM. IF YOU TURN INTO A DRILL, IT IS BECAUSE PRIMUS KNOWS THAT CYBERTRON NEEDS DRILLS. TO DEVIATE FROM YOUR FUNCTION IS TO RISK INVOKING THE WRATH OF GOD AND BRINGING THE WORLD TO ITS KNEES.

IN TRUTH, IT IS ABOUT CONTROL. A MULTI-SKILLED POPULATION IS AN EMPOWERED POPULATION. AND IF YOU REJECT YOUR ALT MODE, WHAT NEXT? WOULD YOU REJECT YOUR CLASS? WOULD YOU REJECT YOUR GOVERNMENT?

THE FUNCTIONISTS DON'T RELY SOLELY ON THEOLOGY WHEN REBUTTING ARGUMENTS FOR CHANGE. WORKING OUTSIDE OF YOUR ALT MODE WOULD BE CONFUSING, THEY SAY. IMAGINE BEING TREATED BY A MEDIC WITH TANK TREADS; YOU WOULD QUESTION THEIR COMPETENCE. AND THEY EXTEND THE SAME QUESTION TO THE MINERS. "WOULD YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE WORKING ALONGSIDE A MICROSCOPE?" AND TO THE MILITARY: "WOULD YOU PUT YOUR LIFE IN THE HANDS OF A SOLDIER WHO TURNS INTO A DATA SLUG?"

AND IT IS TRUE. PEOPLE WOULD BE UNNERVED—AT FIRST. BUT THE FUNCTIONISTS—ENABLED BY THE SENATE—HAVE CREATED THE CONDITIONS THAT HAVE GIVEN RISE TO THIS CULTURE OF SUSPICION; AND THEY HAVE DONE SO DELIBERATELY, BECAUSE IT REINFORCES THE STATUS QUO. MOREOVER, IT FOSTERS DIVISION, AND DIVISION IS ANOTHER MEANS BY WHICH THEY CAN CONTROL THE POPULATION. THE MORE WALLS YOU CAN PUT UP BETWEEN PEOPLE, THE EASIER IT IS TO CONTAIN THEM, AND THE STRONGER THE STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY OF THE SYSTEM.

AND THAT IS WHY WHEN YOU SEE A STRANGER YOU DON'T THINK, "WHAT ARE THEY LIKE?" YOU THINK, "WHAT ARE THEY FOR?" YOU DON'T THINK, "WHAT ARE THEIR HOPES, DREAMS, ASPIRATIONS?" YOU THINK, "WHAT DO THEY DO?" AND THEN YOU THINK, "WHERE ARE THEY POSITIONED IN RELATION TO ME? DO THEY SIT ABOVE, ALONGSIDE, OR BELOW? ARE THEY BETTER THAN ME, OR I THEM?"

EVEN IF YOU BELIEVE IN THE GRAND CYBERTRONIAN TAXONOMY, ASK YOURSELF THIS: WHO DECIDES ON THAT ORDER? AND THEN: WHY SHOULD THERE BE AN ORDER? AND THAT IS THE QUESTION THAT THE SENATE AND THE FUNCTIONISTS FEAR THE MOST, BECAUSE THEY KNOW THAT THEIR WORLD WOULD COLLAPSE IF PEOPLE ARRIVED AT THE ANSWER. WHY SHOULD THERE BE AN ORDER? I'LL TELL YOU: THERE SHOULDN'T BE.

BE HAPPY IN YOUR WORK, THEY SAY, FOR IT ENRICHES YOU. BE GRATEFUL FOR YOUR ALT MODE, FOR IT DEFINES YOU. BE THANKFUL FOR THE SYSTEM—IT PROTECTS YOU. BE MINDFUL OF YOUR BETTERS—THEY THINK FOR YOU. I SAY ENOUGH. REJECT YOUR WORK. REJECT YOUR ALT MODE. RESIST THE SYSTEM AND YOUR "BETTERS"? YOU HAVE NONE. WE ARE ALL EQUAL. AND WE HAVE A RIGHT TO DECIDE HOW TO LIVE OUR LIVES.

MESSATINE.

-COUGH!-

WAIT.

COMING.

KEEP WRITING. IGNORE ME.

I *AM* IGNORING YOU.

MEGATRON—*WAIT.* SOMEONE YOUR SIZE NEEDS ALL THEIR ENERGON RATIONS. YOU CAN'T KEEP TOPPING ME UP...

IF I SLIP AWAY, SO BE IT. YOU'LL MANAGE WITHOUT A PROOFREADER.

YOU SELL YOURSELF SHORT—AS ALWAYS.

VERY WELL: YOUR PROOFREADER AND YOUR *DISTRIBUTOR.*

TERMINUS. I—

NOW, NOW, YOU KNOW THE RULES. I HELP YOUR WORDS FIND THEIR WAY HOME, AND YOU NEVER ASK HOW I DO IT. YOU'D THINK LESS OF ME.

THAT'S NOT WHAT I WAS—

LOOK, YOU NEED PROPER HELP. THESE INJURIES NEEDN'T BE FATAL...

I KNOW, BUT NEW LEGS, NEW FUEL PUMP, NEW SPARK CASING... THEY *COST*—AND OUR LEADERS CLEARLY DON'T THINK I'M WORTH THE INVESTMENT.

YOU SAID IT YOURSELF IN *AFTER THE ARK*: "EVERY MEMBER OF THE *MANUAL CLASS* IS ONE ACCIDENT AWAY FROM *REDUNDANCY*—AND REDUNDANCY IS ONE STEP AWAY FROM DEATH."

IF YOU CAN SAVE SOMEONE, YOU SHOULD SAVE THEM. YOU CANNOT PUT A PRICE ON LIFE.

THE FUNCTIONISTS PUT A PRICE ON *EVERYTHING*—

AND THE MOMENT YOU START TO TAKE MORE THAN YOU GIVE—THE MOMENT YOU BECOME A *BURDEN*—THEY TURN THEIR BACK.

I WILL DECIDE WHAT I AM WORTH, NOT THE *FUNCTIONISTS*, OR THE *SENATE*, OR ANYONE ELSE WHO PRESUMES TO SIT ABOVE ME.

I KNOW, MEGATRON, I KNOW...

BUT THE FUNCTIONISTS ARE STRONG, AND THE SENATE MAY PROVE STRONGER STILL. AND IT IS THE STRONG, NOT THE WEAK, WHO SHAPE THE WORLD...

TERMINUS...

AND *THAT* IS WHY, IF WORDS AREN'T ENOUGH TO CHANGE THE SYSTEM, YOU MAY HAVE TO *FORCE THE ISSUE*.

YOU HAVE TWO WEAPONS AT YOUR DISPOSAL: YOUR BRAIN AND YOUR FISTS. YOU MUST BE PREPARED TO USE *BOTH*.

ME *PERSONALLY*? NO. I—

WE *DISCUSSED* THIS. MY JOB IS—

TO ARTICULATE THE INJUSTICE AT THE HEART OF THE SYSTEM IN THE HOPE THAT OTHERS MIGHT BE INSPIRED, AS ONE, TO PUSH AGAINST IT.

YOU'VE TOLD ME OFTEN ENOUGH.

I'M NOT A FIGUREHEAD.

BUT YOU MAY YET BECOME ONE—AND THAT'S WHY YOU NEED TO LISTEN TO ME.

NEVER BACK DOWN. NEVER COMPROMISE. NEVER BEND. THE MOMENT YOU TRY TO ACCOMMODATE A RIVAL SET OF INTERESTS, YOU SUBORDINATE YOUR OWN.

WHEN YOUR ENEMIES REALIZE THEY CAN'T CORRUPT YOU, OR CONTAIN YOU, OR APPEASE YOU... *THAT'S* WHEN YOU'LL HAVE THEIR ATTENTION—BECAUSE THAT'S WHEN YOU BECOME A GENUINE THREAT.

YOU'RE FOCUSING TOO MUCH ON THE INDIVIDUAL. LASTING POWER RESTS WITH THE *COLLECTIVE*.

OF COURSE—BUT THE MASSES NEED SOMEONE TO *RALLY BEHIND*, SOMEONE TO *TAKE POINT*.

AND EVEN AFTER *THAT*, EVEN AFTER YOU'VE *FORCED* THE WORLD TO BE FAIR... THE TOP TABLE IS SET FOR ONE. YOU MUST BE PREPARED TO SIT ALONE.

THERE'S SOMETHING IN YOUR *TONE*. HAS SOMETHING HAPPENED?

I... WAS VISITED EARLIER TODAY.
I SEE.
THEY SUSPECT, NOT BOLT: HE LACKS THE WIT. BUT THE OTHERS—THE ONES WITH THEIR SIGHTS ON *RECLASSIFICATION*—THEY THINK YOU'RE STILL WRITING.
YOUR WORDS ARE APPEARING ALL OVER CYBERTRON, IN SHIPYARDS AND DISTILLERIES, FIX-IT PITS AND RELINQUISHMENT CLINICS. *YOU ARE BEING DECEIVED.*
DID THEY *THREATEN* YOU?
THEY ASKED ABOUT THE ACCIDENT. THEY SAID THEY WERE SORRY TO HEAR THAT MY RATIONS HAD BEEN REALLOCATED. OH, AND THEY HOPED I'D BE AROUND FOR A LONG TIME YET.
PERHAPS I SHOULD STOP WRITING—JUST FOR A WHILE.

ON THE CONTRARY—WRITE *MORE*, WRITE *QUICKLY*, WRITE WHILE YOU STILL CAN.
PIN YOUR THOUGHTS TO THE PAGE LIKE—LIKE *WRAITH-FLIES*, SO THAT OTHERS MAY STUDY THE PATTERNS ON THEIR WINGS.
THE PEOPLE ARE *HUNGRY*, MEGATRON. YOU NEED TO KEEP FEEDING THEM.
BUT IF I DON'T STOP, THEY'LL—
EH?
TUK
TUK

AAAGH!

OFSTED XVII.
I'M SORRY
I'M SORRY
I'M SORRY

WHAT'S YOUR POINT, MAINFRAME?
MY POINT? I GUESS MY POINT IS—YEAH. MY POINT IS I'M *OUT*.
I'M SORRY.

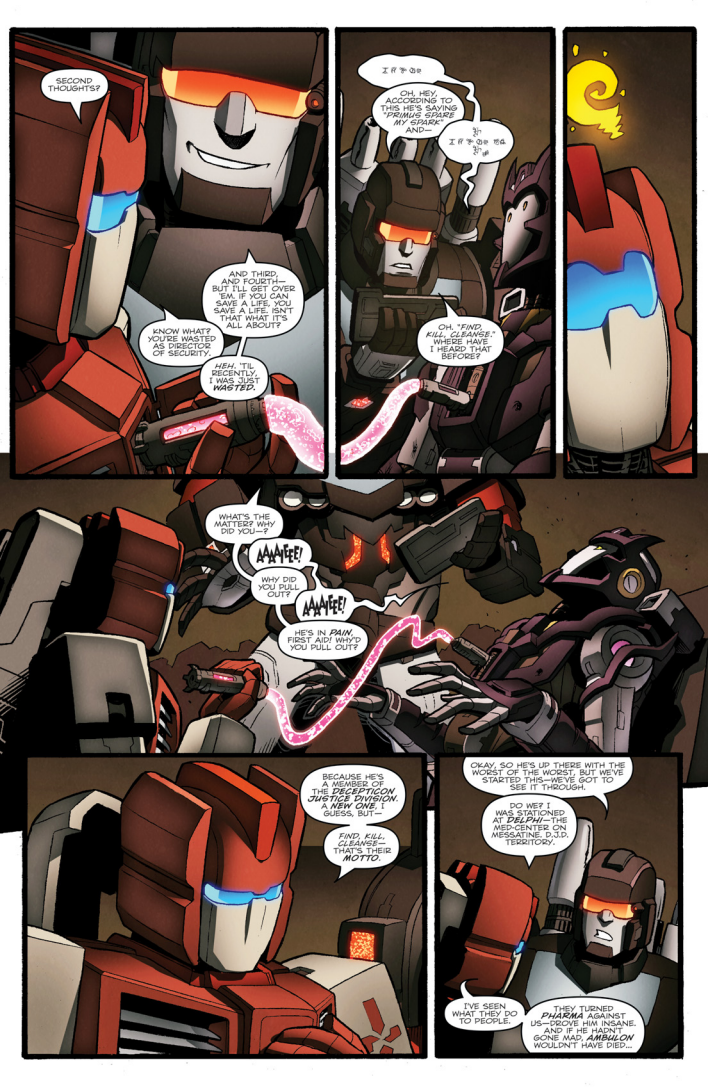
I'M OUT TOO— BUT DON'T EXPECT AN APOLOGY.
DO WHAT YOU LIKE WITH YOUR OWN ENERGON—SPLASH IT UP THE WALLS FOR ALL I CARE—BUT DON'T GUILT OTHERS INTO GIVING UP THEIRS.
FINE—BUT I'D LIKE YOU BOTH TO LEAVE.
IF THIS CYBERTRONIAN IS GOING TO DIE, IT WON'T BE IN FRONT OF THE PEOPLE WHO *LET IT HAPPEN*.

IGNORE THAT. HE DIDN'T MEAN THAT.
YOU UNDERSTAND, DON'T YOU?
OF COURSE. WE'LL MEET YOU BACK AT THE SHUTTLE.
HERE—TAKE THIS. I THINK I'VE GOT THE *TRANSLATION CIRCUIT* WORKING—IT JUST NEEDS TIME TO WARM UP...

SO THEN... YOU AND ME, FOUR DRAMS EACH? FIRST AID...?
I KNEW HE WAS A DECEPTICON. I'VE KNOWN FROM THE MOMENT I EXAMINED HIS SPARK CASING. DECEPTICONS USE THEIR CASING TO MAKE THEIR BADGE, AND—

IT WAS OBVIOUS.
IF THAT CHANGES THINGS—THE FACT I KNEW... IF THAT CHANGES THINGS AND YOU WANT TO WALK, I COMPLETELY UNDERSTAND.

I REPEAT: YOU AND ME, FOUR DRAMS EACH. AGREED?
...
MAINFRAME TALKED ABOUT RISKS. A LARGER DONATION *MULTIPLIES* THOSE RISKS, ESPECIALLY IF—
—YOU'RE NOT PARTICULARLY *FUEL EFFICIENT* IN THE FIRST PLACE. YEAH, FIGURED AS MUCH.


SECOND THOUGHTS?
AND THIRD, AND FOURTH—BUT I'LL GET OVER 'EM. IF YOU CAN SAVE A LIFE, YOU SAVE A LIFE. ISN'T THAT WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT?
KNOW WHAT? YOU'RE WASTED AS DIRECTOR OF SECURITY.
HEH. 'TIL RECENTLY, I WAS JUST ***WASTED.***
OH, HEY, ACCORDING TO THIS HE'S SAYING "*PRIMUS SPARE MY SPARK*" AND—
OH. "*FIND, KILL, CLEANSE.*" WHERE HAVE I HEARD THAT BEFORE?
WHAT'S THE MATTER? WHY DID YOU—?
AAAAEEE!
WHY DID YOU PULL OUT?
AAAAEEE!
HE'S IN ***PAIN.*** FIRST AID! WHY'D YOU PULL OUT?
BECAUSE HE'S A MEMBER OF THE ***DECEPTICON JUSTICE DIVISION.*** A ***NEW ONE.*** I GUESS, BUT—
FIND, KILL, CLEANSE THAT'S THEIR ***MOTTO.***
OKAY, SO HE'S UP THERE WITH THE WORST OF THE WORST. BUT WE'VE STARTED THIS—WE'VE GOT TO SEE IT THROUGH.
DO WE? I WAS STATIONED AT ***DELPHI***—THE MED-CENTER ON MESSATINE. D.J.D. TERRITORY.
I'VE SEEN WHAT THEY DO TO PEOPLE.
THEY TURNED ***PHARMA*** AGAINST US—DROVE HIM INSANE. AND IF HE HADN'T GONE MAD, ***AMBULON*** WOULDN'T HAVE DIED...

AAAAEE!
BUT—YOU'RE A DOCTOR. YOU CAN'T IN GOOD CONSCIENCE—
NOT IN GOOD CONSCIENCE, NO. BUT IF THE PRICE OF LETTING A MASS MURDERER DIE IS A LIFETIME OF GUILT, I'M PREPARED TO PAY IT.
I'M NOT.
I'LL DO IT MYSELF.
IT SEEMS TO BE WORKING. HE CERTAINLY LOOKS HEALTHIER, ALTHOUGH...
...THIS ISN'T ACTUALLY THAT PLEASANT. HOW WILL I KNOW WHEN I'VE GIVEN ENOUGH?
I'M... NOT SURE... I GUESS HE'LL FIND A WAY TO TELL YOU.
HHRK!
CHOOM CHOOM

KLISH
KLISH
ARE YOU ALRIGHT?
I'M TRYING TO CALL FOR HELP, BUT BLUESTREAK'S NOT PICKING UP.
PROBABLY SULKING.
YOU'LL HAVE TO GO AND GET THEM.
QUICKLY BEFORE MR. UNGRATEFUL GETS BACK ON HIS FEET...
YOU'RE COMING WITH ME.
YOU CAN'T CARRY ME— I'D SLOW YOU DOWN.
I'M AN AMBULANCE!
I'D SLOW YOU DOWN IN AMBULANCE MODE, TOO.
I'M NOT LEAVING YOU ALONE WITH HIM.
I WON'T BE ALONE— I'LL HAVE MY FORCE-FIELD. I HAVEN'T GOT ENOUGH JUICE TO THROW A REMOTE FIELD AROUND OUR FRIEND, BUT I CAN PUT A PANIC BUBBLE AROUND MYSELF.
AND ONCE THIS BABY GOES UP, THAT'S THAT.
NOTHING GETS IN, NOTHING GETS OUT.
MAKE IT SNAPPY—
I'M COMING BACK FOR YOU!
"—IN THIRTY MINUTES THIS BUBBLE BURSTS WHETHER I LIKE IT OR NOT."

AND THAT, BUDDY, IS WHAT I THINK OF YOU!
AND WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?
TWO? TWO WHAT?
VOS.
KAON.
TSCHE TSCHE TSCHE TSCHE TSCHE TSCHE

MESSATINE.

...THNKR...

...FGHTR...

I SAID WHAT ARE YOU, A *THINKER* OR A *FIGHTER*?

BECAUSE I HEARD THAT EVEN AFTER THE *YOUT GUN* YOU PUT UP QUITE THE STRUGGLE.

HNNN!

I KNOW, I KNOW. THIS IS YOUR FIRST TIME.

HNNN!

SHHHH. I'LL BE GENTLE. TRY NOT TO RESIST. THE ONES WHO RESIST TEND TO *LEAK*—PHYSICALLY *AND* MENTALLY.

I COULD'VE DONE THIS WHILE YOU WERE OFFLINE, BUT A CONSCIOUS MIND IS FAR MORE RECEPTIVE TO—

UGH!

—ALTERATION.

AND IT IS TRUE. PEOPLE WOULD BE UNNERVED—AT FIRST. BUT THE FUNCTIONISTS—ENABLED BY THE SENATE—HAVE CREAT[illegible] THE CONDITIONS THAT HAVE GIVEN RISE TO THIS CULTURE OF SUSP[illegible]ON; A[illegible] THEY [illegible] DELIBERATELY, BECAUSE IT REINFORCES TH[illegible]S [illegible]RS DIVISION, AND DIVISION IS ANOTHER [illegible] WHICH [illegible] THE POPULATION. THE MORE W[illegible] BETWEEN PEOPLE, T[illegible]ER IT IS TO CONTAIN [illegible] STRUCTUR[illegible]TY OF THE SYSTEM.

OH.

OH!

THE *NOISE* IN YOUR HEAD!

SO MUCH *PRIDE* AND *DOUBT* AND *FEAR*—AND SO MANY *QUESTIONS*.

YOU DON'T KNOW *WHAT* TO THINK, DO YOU?

HNNNN!

I CAN HELP WITH THAT.

AND [illegible] RANGER YOU DO[illegible], "WHAT ARE THE[illegible] HEY FOR?" YOU DO[illegible] "WHAT ARE THE[illegible] YOU THINK, "WHAT DO[illegible]O?" AND TH[illegible]ITIONED IN RELATION [illegible] DO TH[illegible]? ARE THEY BETTER THAN ME, O[illegible]

[illegible]TRUCTION TAXONOMY, ASK YOURSELF [illegible] SHOULD THERE BE AN [illegible]E AND THE FUNCTIONISTS [illegible]RL[illegible]LD COLLAPSE IF [illegible]ER? I'LL

ONCE I'VE REMOVED YOUR MORE *ANARCHIC* THOUGHTS AND TAKEN THE EDGE OFF YOUR INTELLECT—ONCE I'VE *STRAIGHTENED YOU OUT*—YOU'LL REALIZE THAT THE STATUS QUO...

...IS THE STATUS QUO FOR A REASON.

PROTEST IS A FORM OF *SICKNESS*, MEGATRON. BUT DON'T WORRY...

...I'M HERE TO CURE YOU.

BZZT BZZT

WHAT...?

DON'T BELIEVE THIS.

WHAT IS IT? BECAUSE THIS IS A VERY BAD TIME...

ARE YOU *HONESTLY* SAYING YOU WANT ME TO—

BUT I'VE BARELY SCRATCHED THE SURFACE!

NO, NO, I UNDERSTAND. IF HE'S ON THE PREMISES I CAN'T EXACTLY PRESS AHEAD.

BAD NEWS. I'M AFRAID, YOUR TREATMENT HAS BEEN *POSTPONED*.

SLINT

"I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU MADE ME DO THAT."

I'M SORRY, FROID—I HAD NO CHOICE.
HANG ON—HOW CAN HE MAKE YOU DO ANYTHING?
I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU WERE CHIEF PATHO-PSYCHOLOGIST...
NO, NO. I'M AFRAID YOU MUST HAVE MISUNDERSTOOD. RUNG AND I ARE EQUALS. STILL.
IF YOU'RE HERE TO TELL ME ABOUT HOW P.A.* IS A LAST RESORT—FOR WHEN A PATIENT IS A THREAT TO THEMSELVES OR OTHERS—THEN STOP. BECAUSE I'VE HAD THAT LECTURE A THOUSAND TIMES AND I GET IT.
I CARRIED OUT A THOROUGH ASSESSMENT AND DETERMINED THAT P.A. WAS THE MOST APPROPRIATE—NAY, COMPASSIONATE—COURSE OF ACTION.
*PERSONALITY ADJUSTMENT.
EVEN SO, NO ONE CAN COMMISSION P.A. UNILATERALLY. YOU NEED TWO SIGNATURES ON THE ASSESSMENT, TO REDUCE THE RISK OF ABUSE.
WHAT? SINCE WHEN?
SINCE YESTERDAY. THAT'S WHY I'M HERE: THEY'VE CHANGED THE LAW. THE SENATE MET IN SECRET SESSION AND CARRIED SENATOR SHOCKWAVE'S LAST MINUTE AMENDMENT.
YOU REALIZE I'M GOING TO SUFFER FOR THIS. YOU DON'T KNOW WHO TREPAN HAD DOWN THERE...
WAIT—WHY DID YOU TRAVEL ALL THIS WAY? YOU COULD'VE JUST SENT ME A MESSAGE...!
I THOUGHT IF I WAS HERE IN PERSON I COULD COUNTERSIGN YOUR ASSESSMENT—PROVIDED I AGREED WITH YOUR FINDINGS, OF COURSE.
YOU WON'T. WE NEVER AGREE ON ANYTHING.
AWOOGA AWOOGA
WHAT'S HAPPENING?
TWO MILES DOWN. SOME KIND OF POWER SURGE. SOMETHING HUGE. GET-OFF-THE-PLANET HUGE.
THE NUCLEON?
WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE. BOTH OF US. ALL OF US!

OFSTED XVII.
NO...
TRAILCUTTER!
TRAILCUTTER!
CHOOM
CHOOM
WHERE DID YOU COME FROM?!
ME? I'VE BEEN SITTING PRETTY THE WHOLE TIME, TOO WEAK TO DO ANYTHING—LEAST 'TIL I GOT THE CHANCE TO STEAL SOME ENERGY FROM YOUR FRIEND'S FORCEFIELD.
HIS NAME'S TRAILCUTTER—AND PLEASE, PUT DOWN HIS BRAIN.

WHY SHOULD I?
BECAUSE THE WAR'S OVER! HE'S NOT YOUR ENEMY ANYMORE!
THE WAR'S NOT OVER 'TIL MEGATRON GIVES THE WORD.
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?
LUNA 2, SIX MONTHS AGO: MEGATRON ENDED IT. THE WORD IS GIVEN.
HA!
I DON'T THINK SO.
MEGATRON'S SPEECH WAS TELEVISED! IT'S THERE—ON TRAILCUTTER'S DATAPAD!
LOOK AT IT!
ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT! ONE THING AT A TIME...
KRIK
NO!
YOU UP THERE, HELEX?
THIS IS KAON AND V20 REQUESTING REMOTE COLLECTION. COORDINATES OFFSET: 6166 / 4122.
SEE YOU SOON.

MESSATINE.
REPEAT: ALL PERSONNEL PROCEED TO THE LAUNCH PAD AND PREPARE FOR *PHAGED EVACUATION*.
ACCESS TO SHUTTLES WILL BE PRIORITIZED BY CLASS: *INTELLECTUAL CLASS* FIRST, THEN *MANAGEMENT*, THEN *ADMINISTRATIVE*, AND THEN—SPACE PERMITTING—*MANUAL*.
LET ME PASS.
PLEASE—SIR—LET ME PASS.
ARE YOU DEAFY YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN ORDERS TO EVACUATE. THE LAUNCH PAD IS THAT WAY.
I *SAID*, LET ME—
—PASS!
LAUNCH IN THREE MINUTES AND COUNTING.
THE DRILL OPERATIVE—TERMINUS. WHERE IS HE? HE CAN'T MOVE.
DID SOMEONE CARRY HIM TO THE LAUNCH PAD?
THE *LEAKER*? WHO CARES?
"THERE ARE MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT."
Y I'M SORRY I'M SORRY I'M SORRY I'M SORRY I'M SORRY I'M SORRY I'M SORRY I'M

LAUNCH IN TWO MINUTES AND COUNTING...
LAUNCH IN ONE MINUTE AND COUNTING...
V-SHOOM
RIGHT THEN...
WHERE TO START?
BIRTHS, DEATHS, AND INTERVENTIONS

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #34 COVER B

by **NICK ROCHE** Colors by **JOSH BURCHAM**

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #35 COVER A

by **ALEX MILNE** Colors by **JOSH PEREZ**

ARE YOU OKAY, *MINIMUS?* YOU'VE NOT SAID A WORD SINCE TOUCHDOWN.

NOW, NOW. REWIND—YOU KNOW HOW I FEEL ABOUT EXAGGERATION.

WE EXCHANGED PLEASANTRIES. I MADE A REMARK ABOUT *INTERSTELLAR TRAVEL* LEAVING ME DRAINED.

YOU SAID THAT IF THE *FUNCTIONIST COUNCIL* VALUED THEIR ARMED FORCES, THEY'D PROVIDE BETTER *DEEP SLEEP SLABS*, AND THEN YOU PANICKED AND MADE ME PROMISE NEVER TO REPEAT—

AH.

ANYHOW, I MAKE THAT... 128 WORDS.

YOU ARE OUR EYES

YOU ARE OUR EYES

EVOLUTION IS FIRE

YEAH, 128 WORDS IN TWENTY MINUTES. THE POINT IS—*MY* POINT—IS YOU'RE VERY QUIET.

IS IT BECAUSE YOU WERE EXPECTING *DOMINUS?*

BECAUSE IF YOU *WERE*, HE'S BUSY—AS IN STUPID BUSY. THE COUNCIL'S REALLY BEEN PILING IT ON.

I'VE ALWAYS ADMIRED MY SPARK-BROTHER'S WORK ETHIC. BUT EVEN SO—

TWO MILLION YEARS AWAY AND HE'S NOT HERE TO GREET ME IN PERSON?

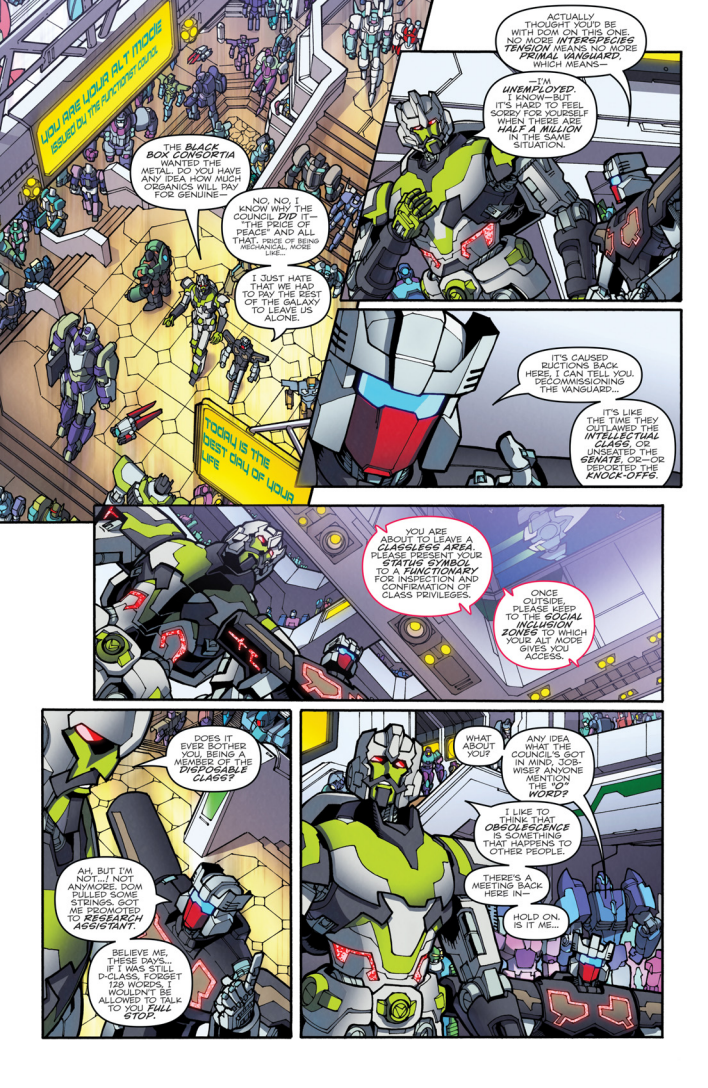
MIND YOU, HE'S NOT *SPOKEN* TO ME IN MONTHS...

IT'S NOT AS IF I WAS INCOMMUNICADO. EVEN BEFORE THE *RECONCILIATION* WE WERE ALLOWED TO TALK TO PEOPLE BACK HOME.

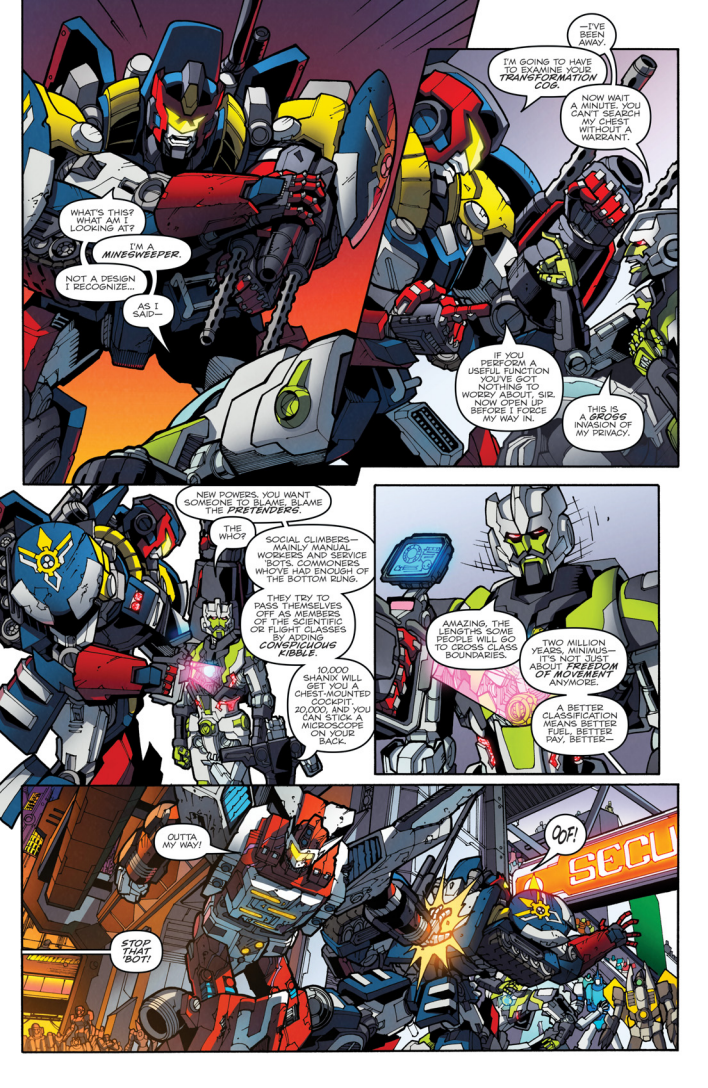
I THINK WHEN WE GET BACK TO THE HAB BLOCK WE SHOULD AVOID TALKING ABOUT THE *RECONCILIATION*. DOM STILL FEELS A BIT... WHAT'S THE WORD?

...

WHATEVER. POINT IS, YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A *MOON-HUGGER* TO THINK WE WERE MAD TO GIVE AWAY *LUNA 2*.


YOU ARE YOUR ALT MODE
ISSUED BY THE AUTOBOT CODE
THE BLACK BOX CONSORTIA WANTED THE METAL. DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MUCH ORGANICS WILL PAY FOR GENUINE—
NO, NO, I KNOW WHY THE COUNCIL DID IT—THE PRICE OF PEACE AND ALL THAT. PRICE OF BEING MECHANICAL. MORE LIKE...
I JUST HATE THAT WE HAD TO PAY THE REST OF THE GALAXY TO LEAVE US ALONE.
TODAY IS THE BEST DAY OF YOUR LIFE
ACTUALLY THOUGHT YOU'D BE WITH DOM ON THIS ONE. NO MORE INTERGRIEVOUS TENSION MEANS NO MORE PRIMAL VANGUARD, WHICH MEANS—
—I'M UNEMPLOYED. I KNOW—BUT IT'S HARD TO FEEL SORRY FOR YOURSELF WHEN THERE ARE HALF A MILLION IN THE SAME SITUATION.
IT'S CAUSED RUCTIONS BACK HERE. I CAN TELL YOU. DECOMMISSIONING THE VANGUARD...
IT'S LIKE THE TIME THEY OUTLAWED THE INTELLECTUAL CLASS, OR UNSEATED THE SENATE, OR—OR DEPORTED THE KNOCK-OFFS.
YOU ARE ABOUT TO LEAVE A CLASSLESS AREA. PLEASE PRESENT YOUR STATUS SYMBOL TO A FUNCTIONARY FOR INSPECTION AND CONFIRMATION OF CLASS PRIVILEGES.
ONCE OUTSIDE, PLEASE KEEP TO THE SOCIAL INCLUSION ZONES TO WHICH YOUR ALT MODE GIVES YOU ACCESS.
DOES IT EVER BOTHER YOU, BEING A MEMBER OF THE DISPOSABLE CLASS?
AH, BUT I'M NOT... I NOT ANYMORE. DOM PULLED SOME STRINGS. GOT ME PROMOTED TO RESEARCH ASSISTANT.
BELIEVE ME, THESE DAYS... IF I WAS STILL D-CLASS, FORGET 128 WORDS. I WOULDN'T BE ALLOWED TO TALK TO YOU. FULL STOP.
WHAT ABOUT YOU?
ANY IDEA WHAT THE COUNCIL'S GOT IN MIND, JOB-WISE? ANYONE MENTION THE WORD?
I LIKE TO THINK THAT OBSOLESCENCE IS SOMETHING THAT HAPPENS TO OTHER PEOPLE.
THERE'S A MEETING BACK HERE IN—
HOLD ON. IS IT ME...

TAKE PRIDE IN BEING A MEANS TO AN END
TAKE PRIDE IN BEING A MEANS TO AN END
...OR ARE THERE A LOT MORE OF YOU AROUND?
NOT SO MUCH MORE OF ME—JUST FEWER OTHER PEOPLE.
DATA-SLUG IS NOW THE THIRD MOST UBIQUITOUS ALL-PURPOSE, AFTER ENERGON DISPENSER AND SHORT-RANGE COMMUNICATOR.
THEY HAD TO ADJUST THE GRAND CYBERTRONIAN TAXONOMY AFTER THE LAST MASS RECALL.
ANOTHER RECALL? WHO WAS IT THIS TIME, THE LASER POINTERS? BECAUSE THEY WERE ALREADY OUTMODED WHEN I LEFT...
OH, THEY WERE RECALLED AGES AGO. NO, IT WAS THE LUNABOTS.
BUT THEY WERE ASTRO CLASS—THE COUNCIL NEVER TOUCHES THE ASTRO CLASS...!
THEY NO LONGER SERVED A PURPOSE. IT'S NOT AS IF PEOPLE CAN TRAVEL TO THE MOON ANYMORE...
IS THERE A PROBLEM, OFFICER? I'M ALL MODE EXEMPT.
THIS STATUS SYMBOL IS OUT OF DATE.
I'VE BEEN AWAY.
I'LL NEED PROOF OF FUNCTION.
OF COURSE.


WHAT'S THIS? WHAT AM I LOOKING AT?
I'M A MINESWEEPER.
NOT A DESIGN I RECOGNIZE...
AS I SAID—
—I'VE BEEN AWAY.
I'M GOING TO HAVE TO EXAMINE YOUR TRANSFORMATION COG.
NOW WAIT A MINUTE. YOU CAN'T SEARCH MY CHEST WITHOUT A WARRANT.
IF YOU PERFORM A USEFUL FUNCTION YOU'VE GOT NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT, SIR. NOW OPEN UP BEFORE I FORCE MY WAY IN.
THIS IS A GROSS INVASION OF MY PRIVACY.
NEW POWERS. YOU WANT SOMEONE TO BLAME. BLAME THE PRETENDERS.
THE WHO?
SOCIAL CLIMBERS—MAINLY MANUAL WORKERS AND SERVICE BOTS. COMMONERS WHO'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THE BOTTOM RUNG.
THEY TRY TO PASS THEMSELVES OFF AS MEMBERS OF THE SCIENTIFIC OR FLIGHT CLASSES BY ADDING CONSPICUOUS KIBBLE.
10,000 SHANIX WILL GET YOU A CHEST-MOUNTED COCKPIT. 20,000, AND YOU CAN STICK A MICROSCOPE ON YOUR BACK.
AMAZING. THE LENGTHS SOME PEOPLE WILL GO TO CROSS CLASS BOUNDARIES.
TWO MILLION YEARS, MINIMUS—IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT ANYMORE.
A BETTER CLASSIFICATION MEANS BETTER FUEL. BETTER PAY. BETTER—
OUTTA MY WAY!
STOP THAT 'BOT!
OOF!
SECU

WHERE'D HE COME FROM?
I FOUND HIM HIDING IN THE HANGARS. HE'S DERANGED. THAT'S THE THING ABOUT *OBE CHIPS*.
"—SOMETIMES THEY ONLY DO *HALF THE JOB*."
THAT'S WHAT I'VE ALWAYS SAID—PEOPLE SLIP THROUGH THE NET.
THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE COUNCIL TRIES TO DO THINGS FROM A DISTANCE.
I AGREE. SHOW ME ANYONE ON THE *SURFACE* WHO DOESN'T PREFER TO DO THIS—
—THE *OLD-FASHIONED* WAY.
KRAM
THIS IS FUNCTIONARY 684 TO *THE COG*.
SUBJECT IS TERMINATED.
REPEAT: THE LAST LUNABOT HAS BEEN *RECALLED*.
CYBERTRON. THE PRESENT DAY.

REWIND?

REWIND!

STAND AWAY FROM THE DOOR! I'M COMING IN!

WRUNCH

ARE YOU ALRIGHT? I'VE NEVER HEARD YOU MAKE A NOISE LIKE THAT...

I'M FINE. *BAD DREAM*. THAT'S ALL. MY FIRST FLASHBACK.

THESE THINGS'LL HAPPEN WHEN YOU'VE GOT A HEAD FULL OF HISTORY.

LOOK WHAT YOU DID TO MY DOOR...

WELL, I WOULDN'T HAVE TO BE ALL HEROIC IF WE LIVED TOGETHER.

AW, NOW C'MON, CHROMEDOME. WE'VE HAD THIS CONVERSATION. ONE STEP AT A TIME, WE SAID. DAY BY DAY.

I *KNOW*, BUT HEARING YOU CRY OUT AND NOT BEING ABLE TO REACH OVER, IT'S...

IT'S *BAD*. IS WHAT IT IS. I DON'T SEE WHY WE CAN'T PICK UP WHERE WE LEFT OFF...

BECAUSE WE LEFT OFF AT DIFFERENT POINTS—AND WITH *DIFFERENT PEOPLE*. I'M STILL TRYING TO PROCESS WHAT YOU DID TO—

SORRY, *WHAT HAPPENED* TO THE OTHER REWIND...

"DIFFERENT" PEOPLE? THE "OTHER" REWIND? YOU'RE YOU AND I'M ME... WE ARE LITERALLY THE SAME PEOPLE.

WE ARE AND WE AREN'T. I DON'T KNOW. I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY. I'M TRYING TO DO RIGHT BY THE MEMORY OF CHROMEDOME. *MY* CHROMEDOME.

I *AM* YOUR CHROMEDOME!

AND I'M YOUR REWIND. OF COURSE I AM.

BUT?

LOOK, WE GOT HERE, WHAT, TWO HOURS AGO? AND STRAIGHTAWAY YOU SAVE ME THE OTHER REWIND'S STUFF.

YES! TO DECORATE THE NEW HAB SUITE YOU ASKED FOR...!

WHAT? YOU COULDN'T SALVAGE ANYTHING FROM YOUR *LOST LIGHT*, SO... I REALLY DON'T SEE WHY IT'S A BIG DEAL.

THAT ORNAMENT. THE RUBY. ON A PLINTH. YOU KNOW...

THE *RAGING PRISM*. IT'S A SOUVENIR FROM *HEDONIA*. YOU BOUGHT IT IN THAT GHINTZY LITTLE GIFT SHOP AND—

AND *THAT'S* MY POINT. I'VE NEVER *BEEN* TO HEDONIA. THE *OTHER* REWIND HAS; I HAVEN'T.

YOU'RE GIVING ME HIS STUFF AND THAT MAKES THIS—THAT MAKES THIS ALL KIND OF... WEIRD.

YEAH, NO, I GET THAT. YOU NEED TO ADJUST, AND THAT'S... I GET IT. AND I WILL. I'LL TRY. I'LL TRY TO BE PATIENT. I PROMISE.

...

DID YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT YOUR FLASHBACK? IF IT WAS THE *D.J.D.*, MY OFFER STILL STANDS. JUST SAY THE WORD.

IT WASN'T THE D.J.D. I WAS RELIVING *THE DARK DAWN*.

THE WHAT?

YOU KNOW, THE *MASS RECALL* WHEN THE FUNCTIONISTS MURDERED ALL THE *LASER POINTERS*.

ER... WHEN WAS THAT?

THIS WOULDVE BEEN... CYCLE 3517. YEAH, 6TH CYCLE 351.

BUT THAT'S HALF A MILLION YEARS AGO—THE FUNCTIONISTS WERE *LONG GONE*. CYCLE 351... WE WERE IN THE MANGANESE MOUNTAINS, FIGHTING SCORPONOK—AS WAS *SHIMMERSTICK*.

AND HE TURNED *INTO* A LASER POINTER.

IT WASN'T A FLASHBACK, REWIND. I THINK YOU JUST IMAGINED IT. THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A "MASS RECALL."

FROM MY *DATABASE*—AND I QUOTE:

"WHEN THE COUNCIL DECREES THAT AN ALT MODE HAS BECOME OBSOLETE IT WILL ORDER A MASS RECALL. REDUNDANT CYBERTRONIANS ARE DESTROYED *REMOTELY*, VIA THE DETONATION OF *OBSOLESCENCE CHIPS*.

"BY DOWNSIZING THE POPULATION THE COUNCIL IS HONORING THE *GUIDING HAND*—PRINCIPALLY *ADAPTUS*—AND REDUCING DEMAND FOR FINITE ENERGON SUPPLIES.

"MASS RECALLS SHOULD THEREFORE BE REGARDED AS ACTS OF BOTH *SACRIFICE* AND *PRAGMATISM*."

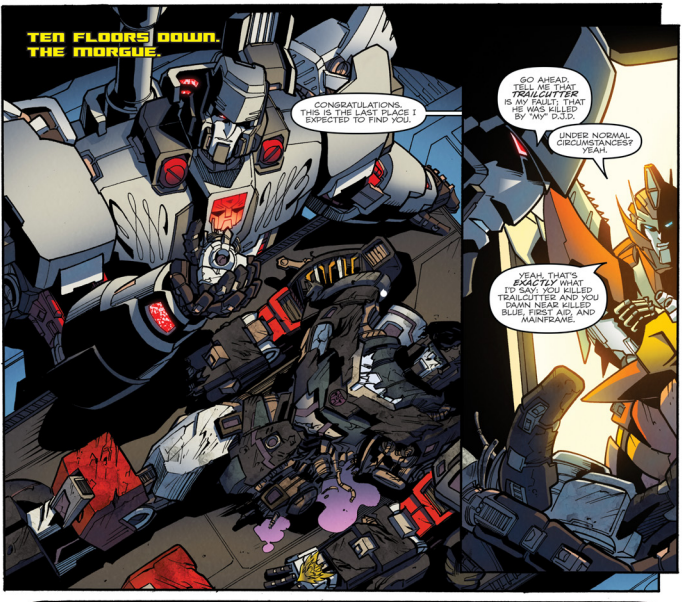
I—

WHAT *AM* I TALKING ABOUT?

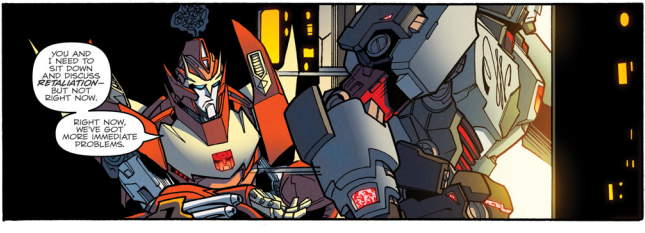
WHAT'S MY *DATABASE* TALKING ABOUT?

"OBSOLESCENCE CHIPS"? YOU MEAN *INHIBITOR* CHIPS? EITHER WAY, I HAVE *NO* IDEA WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.

WHAT'S HAPPENING, GUYS?


TEN FLOORS DOWN. THE MORGUE.
CONGRATULATIONS. THIS IS THE LAST PLACE I EXPECTED TO FIND YOU.
GO AHEAD, TELL ME THAT *TRAILCUTTER* IS MY FAULT; THAT HE WAS KILLED BY "MY" D.J.D.
UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES? YEAH.
YEAH, THAT'S *EXACTLY* WHAT I'D SAY: YOU KILLED TRAILCUTTER AND YOU DAMN NEAR KILLED BLUE, FIRST AID, AND MAINFRAME.

"YOUR GROTTY LITTLE FAN CLUB BLEW THEM UP IN THEIR SHUTTLE—OR *TRIED* TO.
"A PARTING GESTURE BEFORE THEY FLEW BACK TO *MEGATRON MOUNTAIN*, OR WHEREVER THE HELL THEY LIVE."


YOU AND I NEED TO SIT DOWN AND DISCUSS *RETALIATION*—BUT NOT RIGHT NOW.
RIGHT NOW, WE'VE GOT MORE IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS.

A FEW HOURS AGO, *BRAINSTORM* TRIED TO KILL EVERYONE.

MAYBE HE GOT WIND OF YOU TELLING ME HE WAS A *DECEPTICON DOUBLE AGENT*, 'COS NOT LONG AFTER YOUR CALL* HE WALKED INTO SWEEVE'S... AND *WHAM*.

PLEASE ELABORATE ON "WHAM."

WE THINK HE'D BEEN SPIKING THE SHIP'S SUPPLY OF ENGEX WITH SOME KIND OF *ELECTRO-SENSITIVE POISON*. WHEN HE OPENED HIS CASE HE ACTIVATED THE POISON.

BUT NO ONE DIED...

NO, BECAUSE THE *LOST LIGHT INSIDER* WAS RIGHT: SWEEVE *DOES* DILUTE HIS DRINKS.

EVEN THEN, EVERYONE WAS KNOCKED OFFLINE. EVERYONE EXCEPT OUR RESIDENT *TEETOTALERS*:

"RUNG..."

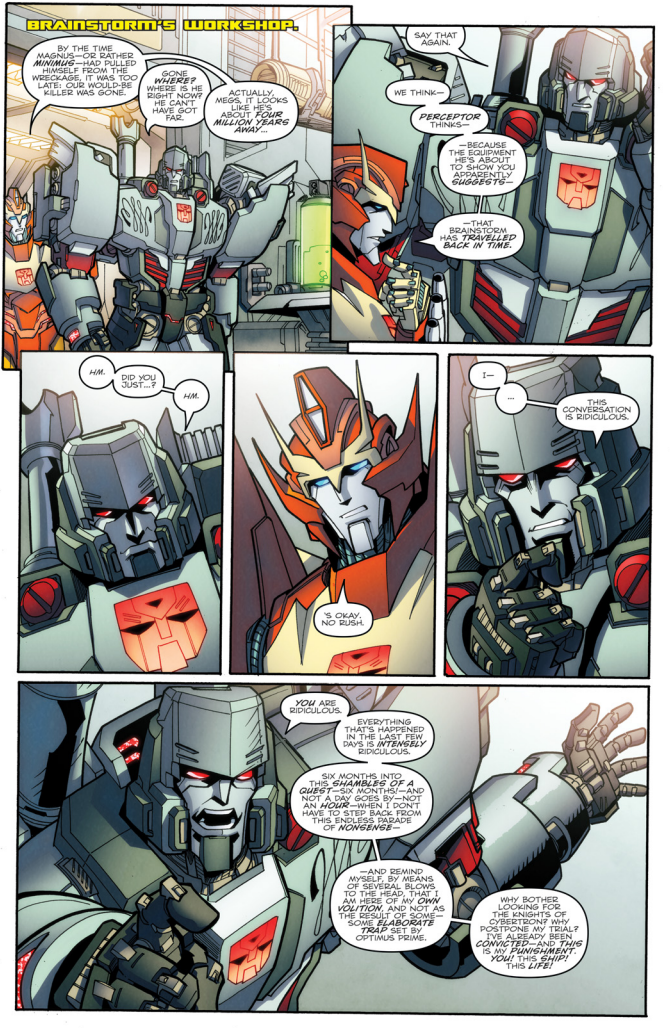
ER— HELP?

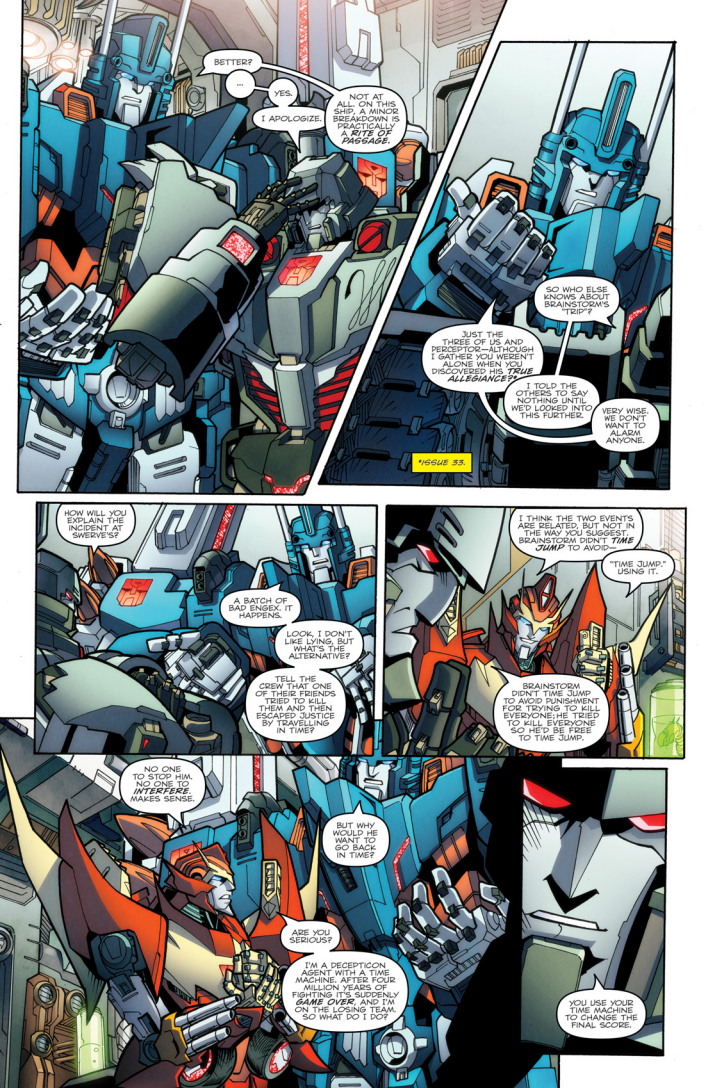
*ISSUE 33.

"...AND ULTRA MAGNUS."

BRAINSTORM!

"JUDGING FROM THE *DISAGGREGATOR GUN* WE FOUND NEARBY, BRAINSTORM KNEW WHICH OF THE TWO WOULD POSE A THREAT...."

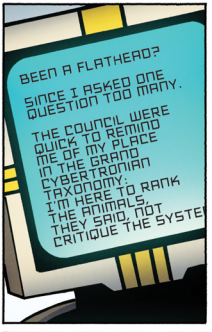

BRAINSTORM'S WORKSHOP.
BY THE TIME MAGNUS—OR RATHER MINIMUS—HAD PULLED HIMSELF FROM THE WRECKAGE, IT WAS TOO LATE: OUR WOULD-BE KILLER WAS GONE.
GONE WHERE? WHERE IS HE RIGHT NOW? HE CAN'T HAVE GOT FAR.
ACTUALLY, MEGS, IT LOOKS LIKE HE'S ABOUT FOUR MILLION YEARS AWAY...
SAY THAT AGAIN.
WE THINK—
PERCEPTOR THINKS—
—BECAUSE THE EQUIPMENT HE'S ABOUT TO SHOW YOU APPARENTLY SUGGESTS—
—THAT BRAINSTORM HAS TRAVELLED BACK IN TIME.
HM.
DID YOU JUST...?
HM.
'S OKAY, NO BUSH.
!—
...
THIS CONVERSATION IS RIDICULOUS.
YOU ARE RIDICULOUS.
EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENED IN THE LAST FEW DAYS IS INTENSELY RIDICULOUS.
SIX MONTHS INTO THIS SHAMBLES OF A QUEST—SIX MONTHS!—AND NOT A DAY GOES BY—NOT AN HOUR—WHEN I DON'T HAVE TO STEP BACK FROM THIS ENDLESS PARADE OF NONSENSE—
—AND REMIND MYSELF, BY MEANS OF SEVERAL BLOWS TO THE HEAD, THAT I AM HERE OF MY OWN VOLITION, AND NOT AS THE RESULT OF SOME—SOME ELABORATE TRAP SET BY OPTIMUS PRIME.
WHY BOTHER LOOKING FOR THE KNIGHTS OF CYBERTRON? WHY POSTPONE MY TRIAL? I'VE ALREADY BEEN CONVICTED—AND THIS IS MY PUNISHMENT. YOU! THIS SHIP! THIS LIFE!


BETTER?
...
YES.
I APOLOGIZE.
NOT AT ALL. ON THIS SHIP, A MINOR BREAKDOWN IS PRACTICALLY A RITE OF PASSAGE.
SO WHO ELSE KNOWS ABOUT BRAINSTORM'S "TRIP"?
JUST THE THREE OF US AND PERCEPTOR—ALTHOUGH I GATHER YOU WEREN'T ALONE WHEN YOU DISCOVERED HIS TRUE ALLEGIANCE?
I TOLD THE OTHERS TO SAY NOTHING UNTIL WE'D LOOKED INTO THIS FURTHER.
VERY WISE. WE DON'T WANT TO ALARM ANYONE.
ISSUE 33.
HOW WILL YOU EXPLAIN THE INCIDENT AT SWERVE'S?
A BATCH OF BAD ENGEX. IT HAPPENS.
LOOK, I DON'T LIKE LYING, BUT WHAT'S THE ALTERNATIVE?
TELL THE CREW THAT ONE OF THEIR FRIENDS TRIED TO KILL THEM AND THEN ESCAPED JUSTICE BY TRAVELING IN TIME?
I THINK THE TWO EVENTS ARE RELATED, BUT NOT IN THE WAY YOU SUGGEST. BRAINSTORM DIDN'T TIME JUMP TO AVOID—
"TIME JUMP." USING IT.
BRAINSTORM DIDN'T TIME JUMP TO AVOID PUNISHMENT FOR TRYING TO KILL EVERYONE; HE TRIED TO KILL EVERYONE SO HE'D BE FREE TO TIME JUMP.
NO ONE TO STOP HIM. NO ONE TO INTERFERE. MAKES SENSE.
BUT WHY WOULD HE WANT TO GO BACK IN TIME?
ARE YOU SERIOUS?
I'M A DECEPTICON AGENT WITH A TIME MACHINE. AFTER FOUR MILLION YEARS OF FIGHTING IT'S SUDDENLY GAME OVER, AND I'M ON THE LOSING TEAM. SO WHAT DO I DO?
YOU USE YOUR TIME MACHINE TO CHANGE THE FINAL SCORE.

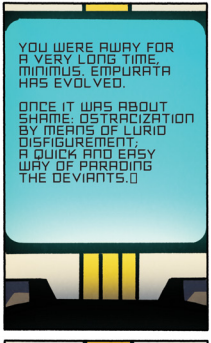
CYBERTRON.
YOU ARE OUR ILLIES
DOMINUS?
DOM?
IT'S JUST US.
YOU ARE OUR ILLIES
HE'LL BE AROUND SOMEWHERE. ACTUALLY, MINIMUS, THERE'S SOMETHING I'VE BEEN MEANING TO TELL YOU...
PEOPLE FIRST, JOBS SECOND!
WAIT— WHAT'S THIS?
THE COUNCIL'S WORST FEAR: THE WILLFULLY NON-EMPLOYED.
WHAT'S THAT IN HER HAND? IS THAT HER—
DID SHE JUST THROW HER TRANSFORMATION COG AT THAT FUNCTIONARY?
YES...
POK
...AND IT WAS THE BRAVEST THING SHE EVER DID.
IN THAT CASE... I FELT SICK.
AND SO YOU SHOULD. IT WAS APPALLING.
DOM SAYS THE MASS RECALL PROGRAM IS AN EXERCISE IN MUNICIPAL EUGENICS—AND IT'S TRUE!
THE COUNCIL EVEN TALK ABOUT "REFINING THE POPULATION," AS IF THEY'RE DOING US A FAVOR!
SO YOU ARE REBELS.
IT'S FAIR TO SAY WE HAVE... MISGIVINGS ABOUT THE COUNCIL. BUT DOM PUTS IT BETTER THAN I DO, SO—
DOMINUS! THERE YOU ARE!

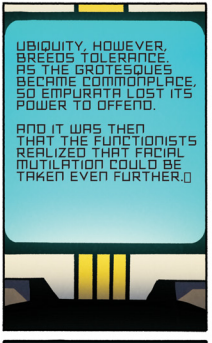
LIVE YOUR LIFE WITHOUT PURPOSE!
CHANGE EVERYTHING BY DOING NOTHING!
ALL HAIL THE USELESS ONE!
WHAT AM I WATCHING?
I GUESS THE BEST WAY TO ATTACK THE COUNCIL IS TO ATTACK YOUR ALT MODE.
I'M AMAZED THEY ALLOWED THAT TO BE BROADCAST.
THEY DIDN'T. DOM LIKES HACKING INTO THE COUNCIL'S SKY-SPIES. FOOTAGE LIKE THAT WON'T REACH A WIDER AUDIENCE.
WAIT A MINUTE, ARE YOU ARE YOU REBELS?
HA! I—LOOK BEFORE I ANSWER. LET ME ASK YOU A QUESTION. THE LUNABOT—HOW DID THAT MAKE YOU FEEL?
...
DON'T WORRY. THIS PLACE IS CLEAN.
NO BUGS. NO CAMS. NO PICK-UPS. FACT, IT'S PROBABLY THE ONLY BLIND SPOT LEFT ON CYBERTRON.
HELLO, MINIMUS.
LONG TIME NO SPEAK.

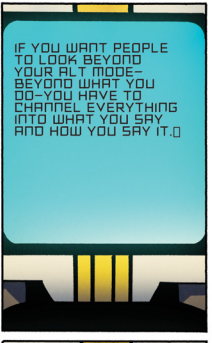
DOMINUS?!
WHAT HAPPENED TO *YOUR FACE?!* HOW LONG HAVE YOU— HAVE YOU—

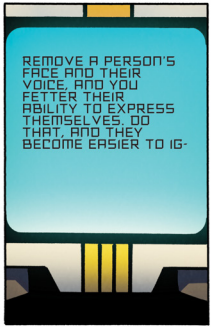

BEEN A FLATHEAD?
SINCE I ASKED ONE QUESTION TOO MANY.
THE COUNCIL WERE QUICK TO REMIND ME OF MY PLACE IN THE GRAND CYBERTRONIAN TAXONOMY: I'M HERE TO RANK THE ANIMALS, THEY SAID, NOT CRITIQUE THE SYSTE

"RANK THE ANIMALS"! IT'S A BIT MORE THAN THAT! HE'S BEEN TOLD TO INCORPORATE THE *LESSER SPECIES* INTO THE G.C.T. AND—
I DON'T CARE ABOUT THAT! THEY'VE STOLEN HIS FACE! HIS *VOICE!*
I MEAN I'M NOT SAYING THERE HAVEN'T BEEN TIMES WHEN I'D HAVE PAID THE MOON TO *SHUT HIM* UP, BUT *THIS*...?


YOU WERE AWAY FOR A VERY LONG TIME, MINIMUS. EMPURATA HAS EVOLVED.
ONCE IT WAS ABOUT SHAME: OSTRACIZATION BY MEANS OF LURID DISFIGUREMENT; A QUICK AND EASY WAY OF PARADING THE DEVIANTS.

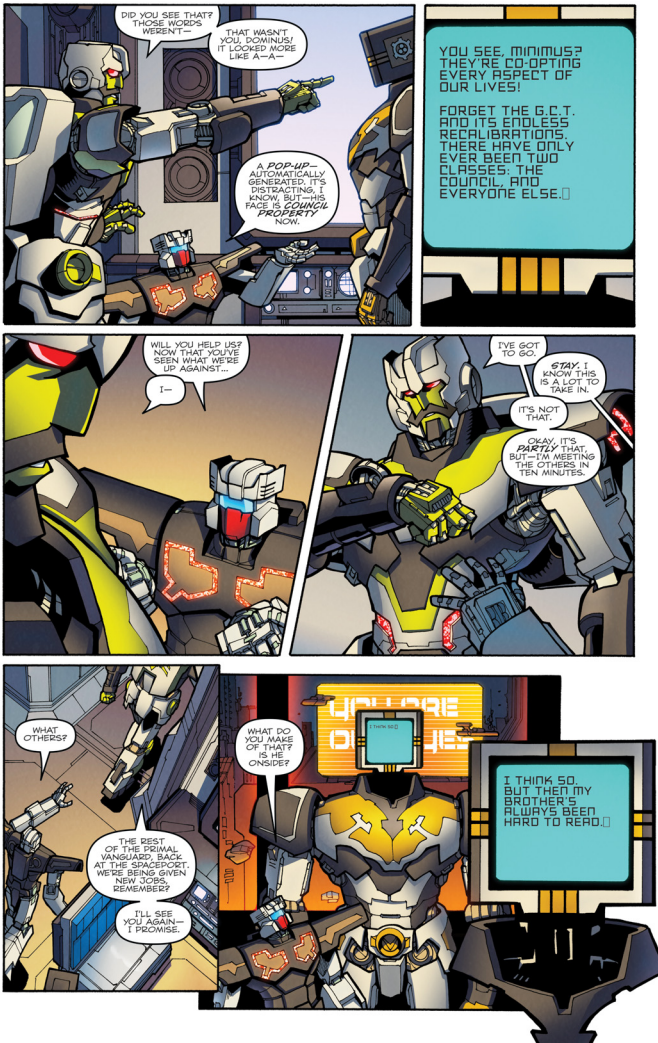

UBIQUITY, HOWEVER, BREEDS TOLERANCE. AS THE GROTESQUES BECAME COMMONPLACE, SO EMPURATA LOST ITS POWER TO OFFEND.
AND IT WAS THEN THAT THE FUNCTIONISTS REALIZED THAT FACIAL MUTILATION COULD BE TAKEN EVEN FURTHER.

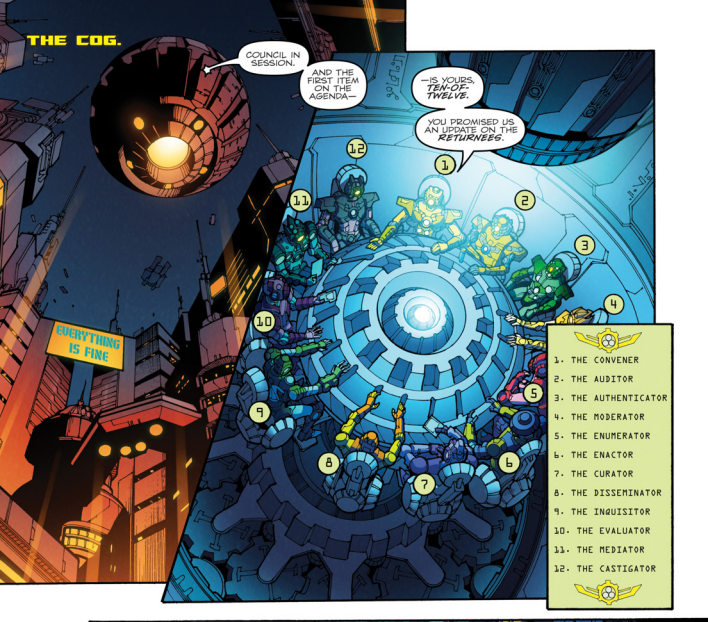

IF YOU WANT PEOPLE TO LOOK BEYOND YOUR ALT MODE— BEYOND WHAT YOU DO—YOU HAVE TO CHANNEL EVERYTHING INTO WHAT YOU SAY AND HOW YOU SAY IT.


REMOVE A PERSON'S FACE AND THEIR VOICE, AND YOU FETTER THEIR ABILITY TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES. DO THAT, AND THEY BECOME EASIER TO IG-

SMILE!
TODAY IS A GOOD DAY
TOMORROW WILL BE EVEN BETTER
MOOD PROMPT ISSUED BY THE FUNCTIONIST COUNCIL

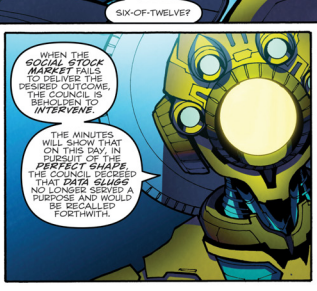
-NORE.


DID YOU SEE THAT? THOSE WORDS WEREN'T—
THAT WASN'T YOU, DOMINUS! IT LOOKED MORE LIKE A—A—
A POP-UP— AUTOMATICALLY GENERATED. IT'S DISTRACTING, I KNOW, BUT—HIS FACE IS COUNCIL PROPERTY NOW.
YOU SEE, MINIMUS? THEY'RE CO-OPTING EVERY ASPECT OF OUR LIVES!
FORGET THE G.C.T. AND ITS ENDLESS RECALIBRATIONS. THERE HAVE ONLY EVER BEEN TWO CLASSES: THE COUNCIL, AND EVERYONE ELSE.
WILL YOU HELP US? NOW THAT YOU'VE SEEN WHAT WE'RE UP AGAINST...
I—
I'VE GOT TO GO.
STAY. I KNOW THIS IS A LOT TO TAKE IN.
IT'S NOT THAT.
OKAY, IT'S PARTLY THAT. BUT—I'M MEETING THE OTHERS IN TEN MINUTES.
WHAT OTHERS?
THE REST OF THE PRIMAL VANGUARD, BACK AT THE SPACEPORT. WE'RE BEING GIVEN NEW JOBS, REMEMBER?
I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN— I PROMISE.
WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THAT? IS HE ONSIDE?
I THINK SO.
I THINK SO. BUT THEN MY BROTHER'S ALWAYS BEEN HARD TO READ.

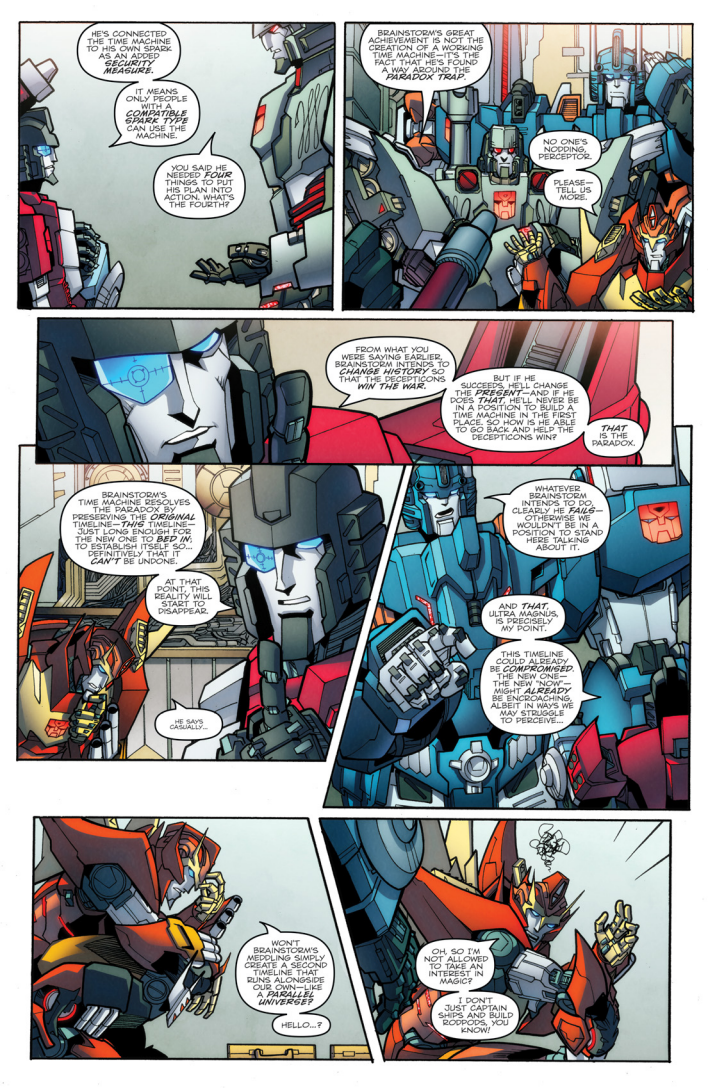

THE COG.
COUNCIL IN SESSION.
—AND THE FIRST ITEM ON THE AGENDA—
—IS YOURS, TEN-OF-TWELVE.
YOU PROMISED US AN UPDATE ON THE RETURNEES.
EVERYTHING IS FINE
1. THE CONVENER
2. THE AUDITOR
3. THE AUTHENTICATOR
4. THE MODERATOR
5. THE ENUMERATOR
6. THE ENACTOR
7. THE CURATOR
8. THE DISSEMINATOR
9. THE INQUISITOR
10. THE EVALUATOR
11. THE MEDIATOR
12. THE CASTIGATOR

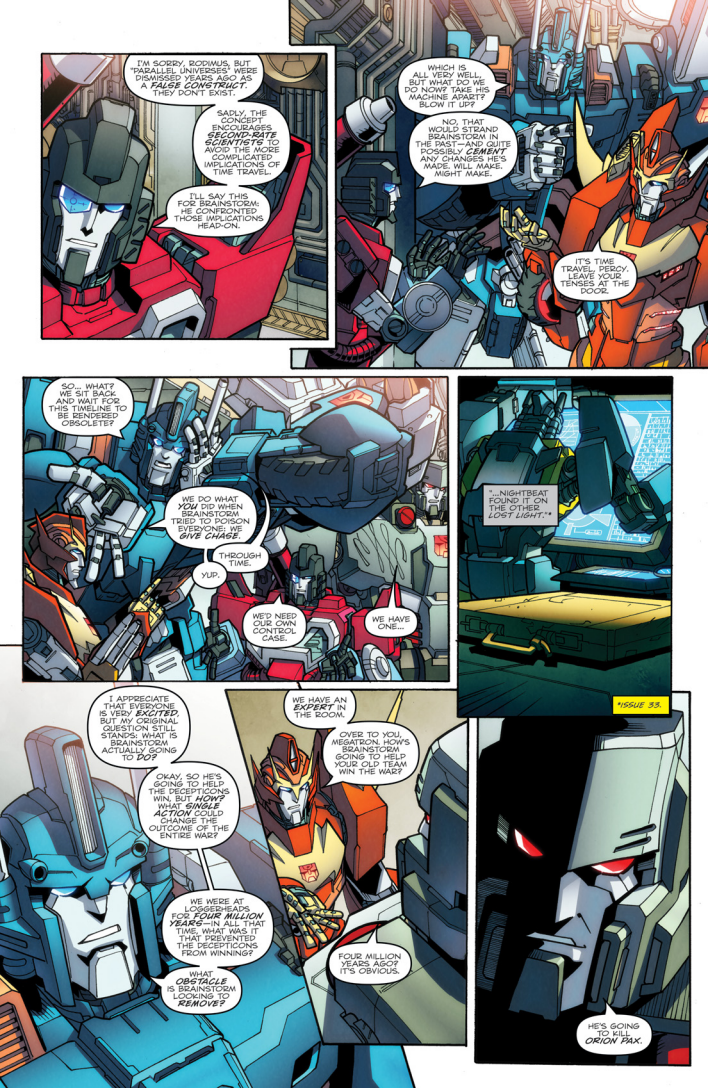
THE PILOT IS A SUCCESS, OWE-OF-TWELVE. THE FUNCTIONARIES ARE BUSY PROCESSING A WAVE OF NEW INTELLIGENCE.
I SHALL PROCEED TO THE SECOND STAGE OF THE ROLLOUT.
VERY GOOD. NOW, ITEM 2 IS A STANDING ITEM: THE NEXT MAGG RECALL.
SIX-OF-TWELVE?

OUR THEOCONOMISTS REMAIN DIVIDED.
A STRICT READING OF THE G.O.T. SUGGESTS THAT THE CITIZENS IN QUESTION STILL HAVE A FUNCTIONAL VALUE—
—HOWEVER, THEIR ABILITY TO STORE INFORMATION THAT MIGHT SUBSEQUENTLY BE USED AGAINST US THREATENS OUR ABILITY TO GOVERN.


WHEN THE SOCIAL STOCK MARKET FAILS TO DELIVER THE DESIRED OUTCOME, THE COUNCIL IS BEHOLDEN TO INTERVENE.
THE MINUTES WILL SHOW THAT ON THIS DAY, IN PURSUIT OF THE PERFECT SHAPE, THE COUNCIL DECREED THAT DATA SLUGS NO LONGER SERVED A PURPOSE AND WOULD BE RECALLED FORTHWITH.

THE LOST LIGHT.
BRAINSTORM NEEDED FOUR THINGS TO PUT HIS PLAN INTO ACTION:
A TIME MACHINE; THE MEANS TO POWER THE TIME MACHINE; THE MEANS TO TRAVEL IN SPACE AS WELL AS TIME; AND—
HIS BRIEFCASE IS THE TIME MACHINE, RIGHT?
ACTUALLY...
...THEY ALL ARE.
ARE THEY CONNECTED?
THEY'RE PARTS OF THE SAME MACHINE, YES. BUILDING BLOCKS.
EACH ONE APPEARS EMPTY—THE COMPONENTS ARE HIDDEN WITHIN THE WALLS.
BRAINSTORM'S TAKEN ONE WITH HIM—THE CONTROL CASE—AND THAT'S THE ONE THAT MATTERS. IT CONNECTS HIM TO HERE AND NOW—ONE OF WHICH WON'T BE AROUND FOR MUCH LONGER.
AND HOW IS HE TRAVELLING IN SPACE? QUANTUM ENGINES?
CORRECT. A REMOTE CONNECTION.
THOUGHT SO.
I'M ON FIRE TODAY.


HE'S CONNECTED THE TIME MACHINE TO HIS OWN SPARK AS AN ADDED SECURITY MEASURE.
IT MEANS ONLY PEOPLE WITH A COMPATIBLE SPARK TYPE CAN USE THE MACHINE.
YOU SAID HE NEEDED FOUR THINGS TO PUT HIS PLAN INTO ACTION. WHAT'S THE FOURTH?
BRAINSTORM'S GREAT ACHIEVEMENT IS NOT THE CREATION OF A WORKING TIME MACHINE—IT'S THE FACT THAT HE'S FOUND WAY ABOUT THE PARADOX TRAP.
NO ONE'S NODDING, PERCEPTOR.
PLEASE—TELL US MORE.
FROM WHAT YOU WERE SAYING EARLIER, BRAINSTORM INTENDS TO CHANGE HISTORY SO THAT THE DECEPTICONS WIN THE WAR.
BUT IF HE SUCCEEDS, HE'LL CHANGE THE PRESENT—AND IF HE DOES THAT, HE'LL NEVER BE IN A POSITION TO BUILD A TIME MACHINE IN THE FIRST PLACE. SO HOW IS HE ABLE TO GO BACK AND HELP THE DECEPTICONS WIN?
THAT IS THE PARADOX.
BRAINSTORM'S TIME MACHINE RESOLVES THE PARADOX BY PRESERVING THE ORIGINAL TIMELINE—THIS TIMELINE—JUST LONG ENOUGH FOR THE NEW ONE TO BED IN, TO ESTABLISH ITSELF SO... DEFINITIVELY THAT IT CAN'T BE UNDONE.
AT THAT POINT, THIS REALITY WILL START TO DISAPPEAR.
HE SAYS CASUALLY...
WHATEVER BRAINSTORM INTENDS TO DO, CLEARLY HE FAILS—OTHERWISE WE WOULDN'T BE IN A POSITION TO STAND HERE TALKING ABOUT IT.
AND THAT, ULTRA MAGNUS, IS PRECISELY MY POINT.
THIS TIMELINE COULD ALREADY BE COMPROMISED. THE NEW ONE—THE NEW "NOW"—MIGHT ALREADY BE ENCROACHING, ALBEIT IN WAYS WE MAY STRUGGLE TO PERCEIVE...
WON'T BRAINSTORM'S MEDDLING SIMPLY CREATE A SECOND TIMELINE THAT RUNS ALONGSIDE OUR OWN—LIKE A PARALLEL UNIVERSE?
HELLO...?
OH, SO I'M NOT ALLOWED TO TAKE AN INTEREST IN MAGIC?
I DON'T JUST CAPTAIN SHIPS AND BUILD RODDOIDS, YOU KNOW!


I'M SORRY, RODIMUS, BUT "PARALLEL UNIVERSES" WERE DISMISSED YEARS AGO AS A FALSE CONSTRUCT. THEY DON'T EXIST.
SADLY, THE CONCEPT ENCOURAGES SECOND-RATE SCIENTISTS TO IGNORE THE MORE COMPLICATED IMPLICATIONS OF TIME TRAVEL.
I'LL SAY THIS FOR BRAINSTORM: HE CONFRONTED THOSE IMPLICATIONS HEAD-ON.
WHICH IS ALL VERY WELL, BUT WHAT DO WE DO NOW? TAKE HIS MACHINE APART? BLOW IT UP?
NO, THAT WOULD STRAND BRAINSTORM IN THE PAST—AND QUITE POSSIBLY CEMENT ANY CHANGES HE'S MADE. WILL MAKE. MIGHT MAKE.
IT'S TIME TRAVEL, PERCY. LEAVE YOUR TENSES AT THE DOOR.
SO... WHAT? WE SIT BACK AND WAIT FOR THIS TIMELINE TO BE RENDERED OBSOLETE?
WE DO WHAT YOU DID WHEN BRAINSTORM TRIED TO POISON EVERYONE: WE GIVE CHASE.
THROUGH TIME.
YUP.
WE'D NEED OUR OWN CONTROL CASE.
WE HAVE ONE...
"...NIGHTBEAT FOUND IT ON THE OTHER LOST LIGHT."
*ISSUE 33.
I APPRECIATE THAT EVERYONE IS VERY EXCITED, BUT MY ORIGINAL QUESTION STILL STANDS: WHAT IS BRAINSTORM ACTUALLY GOING TO DO?
OKAY, SO HE'S GOING TO HELP THE DECEPTICONS WIN, BUT NOW? WHAT SINGLE ACTION COULD CHANGE THE OUTCOME OF THE ENTIRE WAR?
WE WERE AT LOGGERHEADS FOR FOUR MILLION YEARS—IN ALL THAT TIME, WHAT WAS IT THAT PREVENTED THE DECEPTICONS FROM WINNING?
WHAT OBSTACLE IS BRAINSTORM LOOKING TO REMOVE?
WE HAVE AN EXPERT IN THE ROOM.
OVER TO YOU, MEGATRON. HOW'S BRAINSTORM GOING TO HELP YOUR OLD TEAM WIN THE WAR?
FOUR MILLION YEARS AGO? IT'S OBVIOUS.
HE'S GOING TO KILL ORION PAX.

CYBERTRON

H—

AKH HAKH

HELP!

POK

YOU ARE OUR ELITES

IT IS AN OFFENSE TO TAMPER WITH THE RECENTLY RECALLED A *HARVESTER UNIT* WILL BE ALONG SHORTLY.

REPEAT: IT IS AN OFFENSE TO—

REWIND!

ALL THE DATA SLUGS ARE BEING RECALLED! YOU NEED TO, I DON'T KNOW, *HIDE* OR SOMETHING BEFORE THEY—

I'M ALRIGHT. IT'S *DOMINUS*...

TELL YOUR SPARK BROTHER WHAT THE FUNCTIONISTS HAVE DONE TO YOU.

ERROR. PLEASE REPEAT.▯

THEY TOOK HIS WORDS!

HIS WHAT?

HIS *VOCABULARY*! ALL HE'S GOT LEFT ARE THE *BASICS*: YES, NO, UP, DOWN, BIG, SMALL....

AND THE WORDS HE'S LOST—WHEN YOU SPEAK TO HIM, THE WORDS HE'S LOST—HE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT THEY *MEAN* ANYMORE!

AND THERE ARE CERTAIN WORDS, MINIMUS—*TINY* WORDS—*IMPORTANT* WORDS—

THERE ARE CERTAIN WORDS YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE.

THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU ACT AGAINST US.

THAT'S NOT A POP-UP...

THEY'RE TALKING TO US. NO—THEY'RE *REACTING* TO US!

WHICH MEANS... THEY'RE *WATCHING* US. BUT THERE'S NO WAY THEY COULD—

WAIT. NEW MESSAGE.

LOOK YOUR FRIEND IN THE EYE AND ASK HIM WHAT HE DOES.

MINIMUS? YOUR MEETING... WHAT HAPPENED? WHAT DID THE FUNCTIONARIES SAY?

NOTHING. REALLY. THEY TOLD US WE'RE TO BECOME *SURVEILLANCE OFFICERS*.

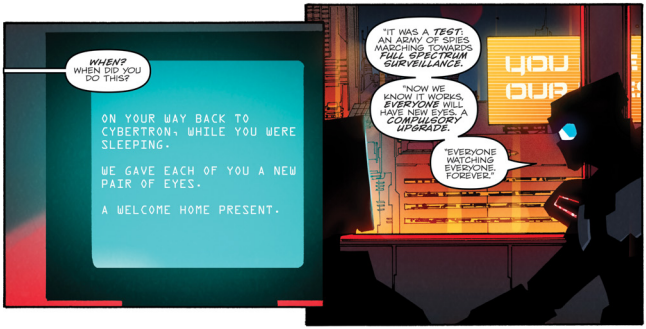
THEY SAID THEY ADMIRED OUR *POWERS OF OBSERVATION* AND THAT—

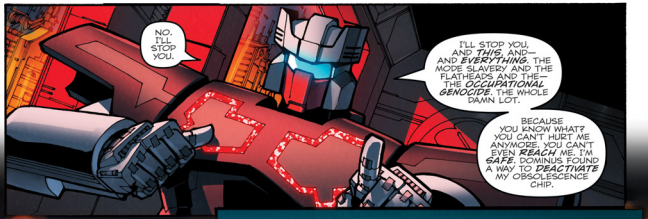
OH MY GOD.

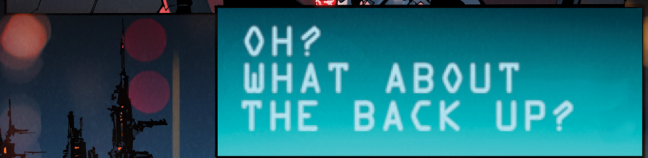
THEY'VE DONE SOMETHING TO MY *EYES*, HAVEN'T THEY?

ALL THIS TIME... ALL THIS TIME THEY'VE BEEN WATCHING YOU—

—THROUGH ME.







The Custom-Made Now - An Elegant Chaos Prologue

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #35 COVER B

by **NICK ROCHE** Colors by **JOSH BURCHAM**

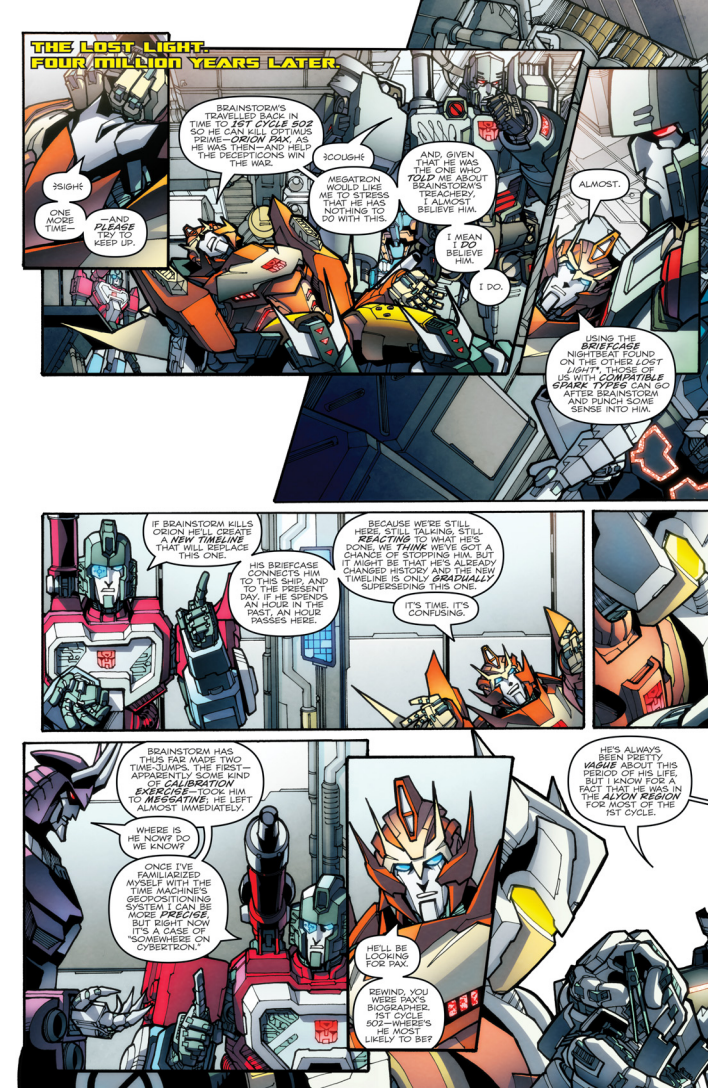
MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #36 COVER A

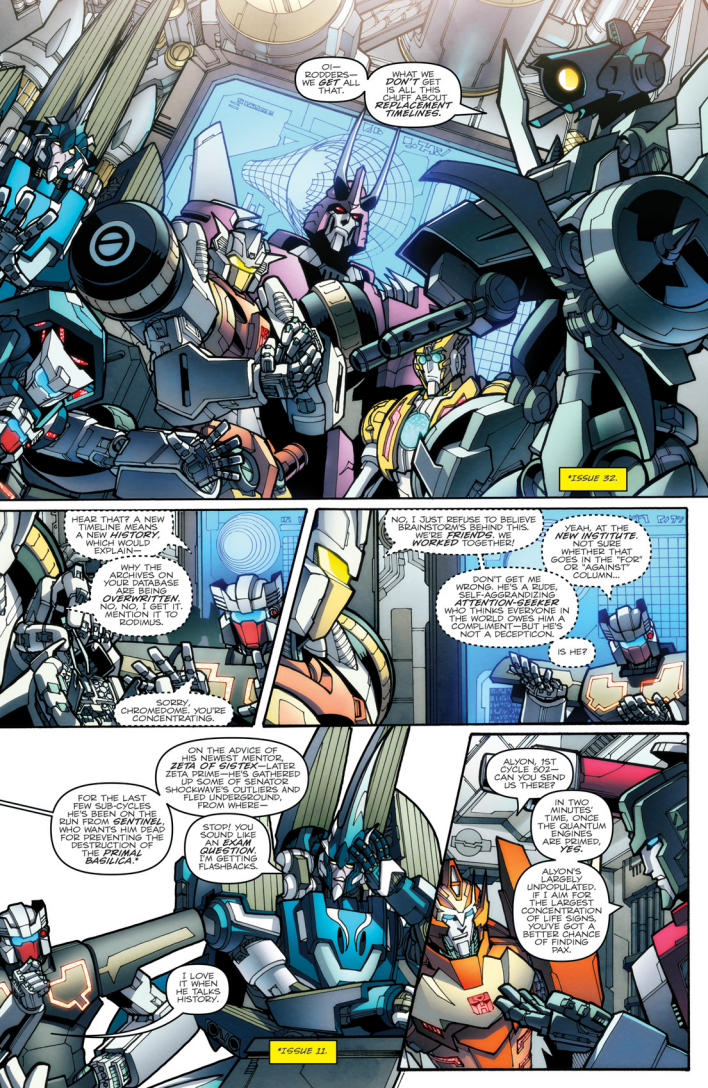
by **ALEX MILNE** Colors by **JOSH PEREZ**

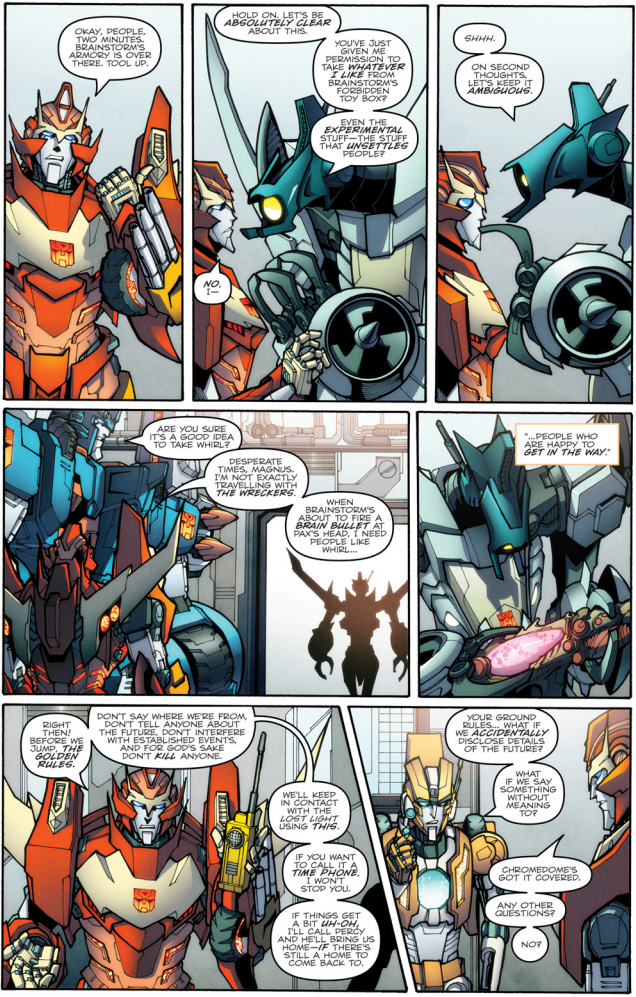
CYBERTRON.
Four million years ago.
The Alyon region. Before...
...and after.
And in due course...
ROLLER HEAVYWEIGHT
ARE YOU NOT GETTING A FORGEFUL SENSE OF DÉJÀ VU?
HOW MANY TIMES MUST WE SEND YOU LOT PACKING BEFORE YOU GET THE MESSAGE THAT THIS HOT SPOT—
—IS UNDER OUR PROTECTION!
ORION PAX OUTLAW

WHAT DID YOU EXPECT, PAX?
THEY'RE THE ELITE GUARD—SENTINEL DIDN'T PICK 'EM FOR THEIR BRAINS.
WINDCHARGER OUTLIER (ELECTROMAGNETIC ARMS)
IT'S NOT THEIR—
OOF!
—BRAINS THAT I'M WORRIED ABOUT!
SKIDS OUTLIER (SUPER-LEARNER)
IN FACT, I'LL TELL YOU WHAT I'LL DO...
TSCHE-CHU-CHU-CHE
OW-OW-OW.
WHAT? WHAT'S UP?
BACK PAIN.
EH?
PAIN. IN THE BACK. IN THE TRAILER.
ACTUALLY, NO. NOT PAIN. SOMETHING ELSE. SOMETHING ODD.
SOMETHING WRONG.
SOMETHING—

BREAK THEIR STUFF AND RUN HOME CRYING.
WATCH.
DAMUS A.K.A. GLITCH
OUTLIER
(POWER OVER MACHINERY)
THEY'RE RETREATING!
I THINK IT WAS THE BANTER THAT DID IT. I'D BE RUNNING TOO.
CALL THAT RUNNING? I'VE SEEN CONTINENTS MOVE QUICKER THAN THAT.
I'LL HELP THEM ON THEIR WAY...!
'SUP.
Elegant CHAOS
PART 1: ALL OUR PARLOUS YESTERDAYS


THE LOST LIGHT: FOUR MILLION YEARS LATER.
BRAINSTORM'S TRAVELLED BACK IN TIME TO 1ST CYCLE 502 SO HE CAN KILL OPTIMUS PRIME—ORION PAX, AS HE WAS THEN—AND HELP THE DECEPTICONS WIN THE WAR.
:SIGH:
ONE MORE TIME—
—AND PLEASE TRY TO KEEP UP.
:COUGH:
MEGATRON WOULD LIKE ME TO STRESS THAT HE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS.
AND, GIVEN THAT HE WAS THE ONE WHO TOLD ME ABOUT BRAINSTORM'S TREACHERY, I ALMOST BELIEVE HIM.
I MEAN I DO BELIEVE HIM.
I DO.
ALMOST.
USING THE BRIEFCASE NIGHTBEAT FOUND ON THE OTHER LOST LIGHT*, THOSE OF US WITH COMPATIBLE SPARK TYPES CAN GO AFTER BRAINSTORM AND PUNCH SOME SENSE INTO HIM.
IF BRAINSTORM KILLS ORION HE'LL CREATE A NEW TIMELINE THAT WILL REPLACE THIS ONE.
HIS BRIEFCASE CONNECTS HIM TO THIS SHIP, AND TO THE PRESENT DAY. IF HE SPENDS AN HOUR IN THE PAST, AN HOUR PASSES HERE.
BECAUSE WE'RE STILL HERE, STILL TALKING, STILL REACTING TO WHAT HE'S DONE, WE THINK WE'VE GOT A CHANCE OF STOPPING HIM. BUT IT MIGHT BE THAT HE'S ALREADY CHANGED HISTORY AND THE NEW TIMELINE IS ONLY GRADUALLY SUPERSEDING THIS ONE.
IT'S TIME. IT'S CONFUSING.
BRAINSTORM HAS THUS FAR MADE TWO TIME-JUMPS. THE FIRST—APPARENTLY SOME KIND OF CALIBRATION EXERCISE—TOOK HIM TO MEGGATINE; HE LEFT ALMOST IMMEDIATELY.
WHERE IS HE NOW? DO WE KNOW?
ONCE I'VE FAMILIARIZED MYSELF WITH THE TIME MACHINE'S GEOPOSITIONING SYSTEM I CAN BE MORE PRECISE, BUT RIGHT NOW IT'S A CASE OF "SOMEWHERE ON CYBERTRON."
HE'S ALWAYS BEEN PRETTY VAGUE ABOUT THIS PERIOD OF HIS LIFE, BUT I KNOW FOR A FACT THAT HE WAS IN THE ALYON REGION FOR MOST OF THE 1ST CYCLE.
HE'LL BE LOOKING FOR PAX.
REWIND, YOU WERE PAX'S BIOGRAPHER. 1ST CYCLE 502—WHERE'S HE MOST LIKELY TO BE?


OI—ROODERS, WE *GET* ALL THAT.
WHAT WE *DON'T* GET IS ALL THIS CHIFF ABOUT *REPLACEMENT TIMELINES.*
*ISSUE 32.
HEAR THAT? A NEW TIMELINE MEANS A NEW *HISTORY*, WHICH WOULD EXPLAIN—
WHY THE ARCHIVES ON YOUR DATABASE ARE BEING *OVERWRITTEN*. NO, NO, I GET IT. MENTION IT TO RODIMUS.
SORRY, CHROMEDOME. YOU'RE CONCENTRATING.
NO, I JUST REFUSE TO BELIEVE BRAINSTORM'S BEHIND THIS. WE'RE *FRIENDS*. WE *WORKED* TOGETHER!
YEAH, AT THE *NEW INSTITUTE*. NOT SURE WHETHER THAT GOES IN THE "FOR" OR "AGAINST" COLUMN...
DON'T GET ME WRONG. HE'S A SLIDE, SELF-AGGRANDIZING *ATTENTION-SEEKER* WHO THINKS EVERYONE IN THE WORLD OWES HIM A COMPLIMENT—BUT HE'S NOT A DECEPTICON.
IS HE?
ON THE ADVICE OF HIS NEWEST MENTOR, *ZETA OF SYTEX*—LATER, ZETA PRIME—HE'S GATHERED UP SOME OF SENATOR SHOCKWAVE'S OUTLIERS AND FLED UNDERGROUND. FROM WHERE—
FOR THE LAST FEW SUB-CYCLES HE'S BEEN ON THE RUN FROM *SENTINEL* WHO WANTS HIM DEAD FOR PREVENTING THE DESTRUCTION OF THE *PRIMAL BASILICA*.*
STOP! YOU SOUND LIKE AN *EXAM QUESTION*. I'M GETTING FLASHBACKS.
I LOVE IT WHEN HE TALKS HISTORY.
*ISSUE 11.
ALYON, 1ST CYCLE 502—CAN YOU SEND US THERE?
IN TWO MINUTES' TIME, ONCE THE QUANTUM ENGINES ARE PRIMED, *YES*.
ALYON'S LARGELY UNPOPULATED. IF I AIM FOR THE LARGEST CONCENTRATION OF LIFE SIGNS, YOU'VE GOT A BETTER CHANCE OF FINDING PAX.

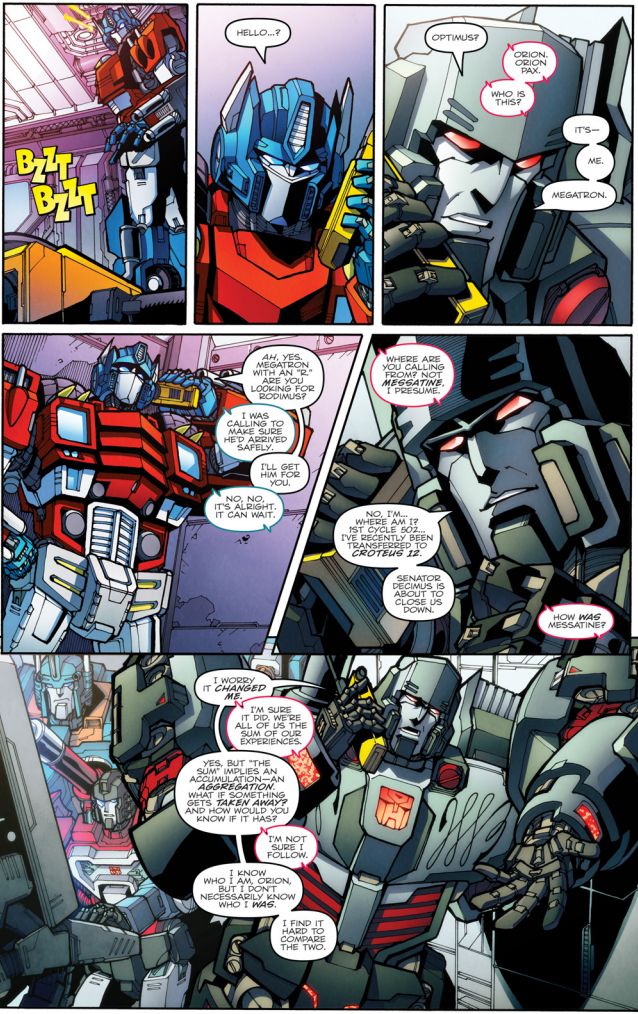

OKAY, PEOPLE, TWO MINUTES. BRAINSTORM'S ARMORY IS OVER THERE. TOOL UP.
HOLD ON. LET'S BE ABSOLUTELY CLEAR ABOUT THIS.
YOU'VE JUST GIVEN ME PERMISSION TO TAKE WHATEVER I LIKE FROM BRAINSTORM'S FORBIDDEN TOY BOX?
EVEN THE EXPERIMENTAL STUFF—THE STUFF THAT UNSETTLES PEOPLE?
NO. I—
SHHH.
ON SECOND THOUGHTS, LET'S KEEP IT AMBIGUOUS.
ARE YOU SURE IT'S A GOOD IDEA TO TAKE WHIRL?
DESPERATE TIMES, MAGNUS. I'M NOT EXACTLY TRAVELLING WITH THE WRECKERS.
WHEN BRAINSTORM'S ABOUT TO FIRE A BRAIN BULLET AT PAX'S HEAD, I NEED PEOPLE LIKE WHIRL...
"...PEOPLE WHO ARE HAPPY TO GET IN THE WAY."
RIGHT THEN! BEFORE WE JUMP, THE GOLDEN RULES.
DON'T SAY WHERE WE'RE FROM. DON'T TELL ANYONE ABOUT THE FUTURE. DON'T INTERFERE WITH ESTABLISHED EVENTS, AND FOR GOD'S SAKE DON'T KILL ANYONE.
WE'LL KEEP IN CONTACT WITH THE LOST LIGHT USING THIS.
IF YOU WANT TO CALL IT A TIME PHONE, I WON'T STOP YOU.
IF THINGS GET A BIT UH-OH, I'LL CALL PERCY AND HE'LL BRING US HOME—IF THERE'S STILL A HOME TO COME BACK TO.
YOUR GROUND RULES... WHAT IF WE ACCIDENTALLY DISCLOSE DETAILS OF THE FUTURE?
WHAT IF WE SAY SOMETHING WITHOUT MEANING TO?
CHROMEDOME'S GOT IT COVERED.
ANY OTHER QUESTIONS?
NO?

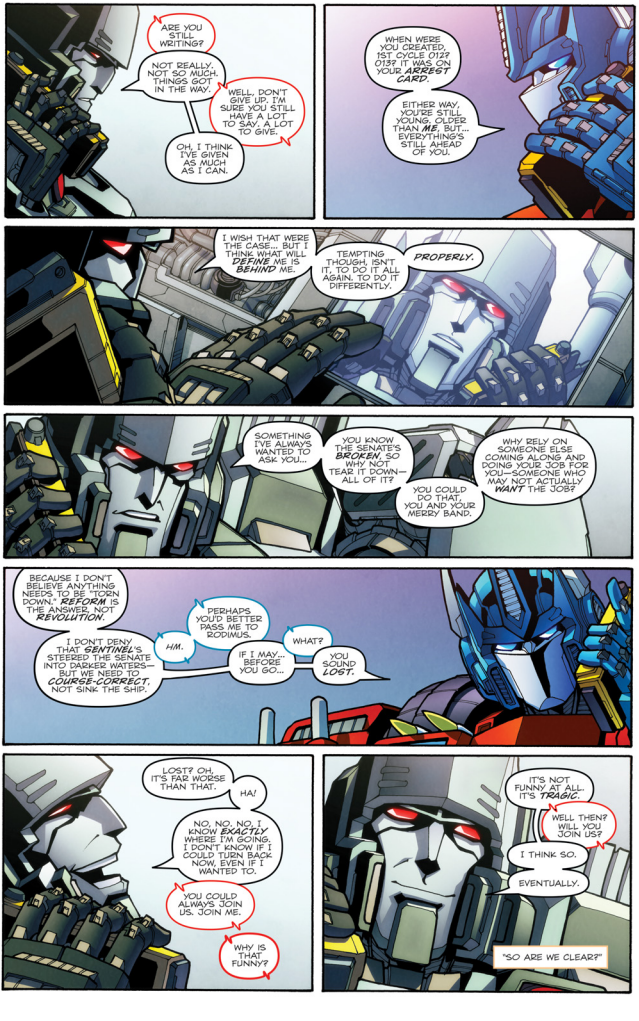
"THEN OFF WE GO!"
I DON'T TAKE KINDLY TO STRANGERS WITH GUNS.
ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY'RE GRINNING AT ME.
CAN SOMEONE TELL ME WHAT'S HAPPENING UP THERE?
YOU GET ONE CHANCE TO EXPLAIN WHO YOU ARE, WHY YOU'RE HERE, AND WHY I SHOULD BELIEVE ANYTHING YOU SAY.
HEY! HEY! EASY! CHECK OUT THE BADGE!
YOU WORK FOR THE SENATE?
EH?
NO.
WHAT?
WE'RE AUTOBOTS, JUST LIKE YOU... AREN'T.
YET.
TUMBLER? IS THAT YOU?
IT IS— EXCEPT I GO BY THE NAME OF CHROMEDOME NOW.
AND WHIRL! I THOUGHT YOU WERE IN PRISON...!
OH GOD, I AM. AREN'T I? ER—DAY RELEASE.
CAN WE START AGAIN? I'M RODIMUS.
I'M A GOODIE.
SO ZETA DID GET THE MESSAGE...
MESSAGE?
WE CALLED FOR REINFORCEMENTS.
HOW DID YOU GET HERE? SOME KIND OF TRANSMAT SYSTEM?
YES.
DEFINITELY.
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN. I THOUGHT YOU MIGHTVE FOLLOWED IN YOUR PARTNER'S FOOTSTEPS AND JOINED THE SENAT'S SECURITY FORCES.
PROWL WOULD TELL YOU HE HAD HIS REASONS—SORRY. HAS HIS REASONS. BUT NO, HE AND I FELL OUT OVER THAT.
COME ON. YOU CAN TELL ME ALL ABOUT IT ON THE WAY BACK TO THE DUGOUT.

I APOLOGIZE FOR THE EARLIER MISUNDERSTANDING, RODIMUS.
AH, NO WORRIES, PAX.
ANCIENT HISTORY.
BUT WHAT'S THE SCORE HERE? WHY ARE YOU GUYS CAMPED OUTSIDE A HOT SPOT?
IT'S NOT JUST ANY HOT SPOT— IT'S THE FIRST IN A MILLION YEARS.
IT LOOKS LIKE A HAND.
THE HAND OF PRIMUS, PRESSING THE PLANET INTO SHAPE.
I DON'T REMEMBER HEARING ABOUT A NEW HOT SPOT.
THAT'S 'COS THE SENATE IS TRYING TO KEEP IT A SECRET.
REALLY? WHY?
AH, PAX EXPLAINS IT BETTER.
DON'T YOU THINK THAT'S AWESOME, CYCLONUS?
THAT... OBJECT, ORION. THE ONE IN THE SKY, ABOVE THE HOT SPOT. WHAT IS IT?
YOUR GUESS IS AS GOOD AS MINE.
WE THINK IT COULD BE SOME KIND OF MONITORING STATION.
IT CERTAINLY HASN'T FIRED ON US. IN FACT IT HASN'T DONE ANYTHING SINCE IT ARRIVED YESTERDAY EVENING.
THAT DOESN'T MEAN IT'S NOT BAD NEWS.
WELL LOOK AT THAT— SOMEONE'S FINALLY FINISHED RECHARGING. YOU SPEND HALF YOUR TIME FLAT ON YOUR BACK!
HEH— SOUNDS LIKE A 'BOT I USED TO KNOW.
I DOUBT IT...

AS SOCIETY BECOMES MORE *SECULAR*, SO THE *FUNCTIONIST COUNCIL* BECOMES LESS INFLUENTIAL.
SECTIONS OF THE PUBLIC WOULD SEE A NEW HOT SPOT—ESPECIALLY ONE THAT SHARES—AS *PROOF OF PRIMUS*, MAKING IT EASIER FOR THE COUNCIL TO ARGUE FOR THE REINTRODUCTION OF *HARSHER FUNCTIONISM*.
ZETA THINKS THE SENATE—OR RATHER SENTINEL'S FACTION *WITHIN* THE SENATE—INTENDS TO *DESTROY* THE HOT SPOT SO AS TO AVOID A FUNCTIONIST TAKEOVER.
AND THAT'S WHY YOU'RE HERE: TO PROTECT THE SPARKS.
WE INTERCEPTED SATELLITE PICTURES OF THE HOT SPOT AND GOT HERE BEFORE THE ELITE GUARD. WE'VE BEEN KEEPING THEM AT BAY EVER SINCE.
AS SOON AS THE SPARKS ARE BRIGHT ENOUGH TO BE HARVESTED, WE CAN SEND THEM SOMEWHERE ELSE. SOMEWHERE SAFE.
THAT'S PRETTY AWESOME.
...*TRAILBREAKER'S* ONE OF A KIND.

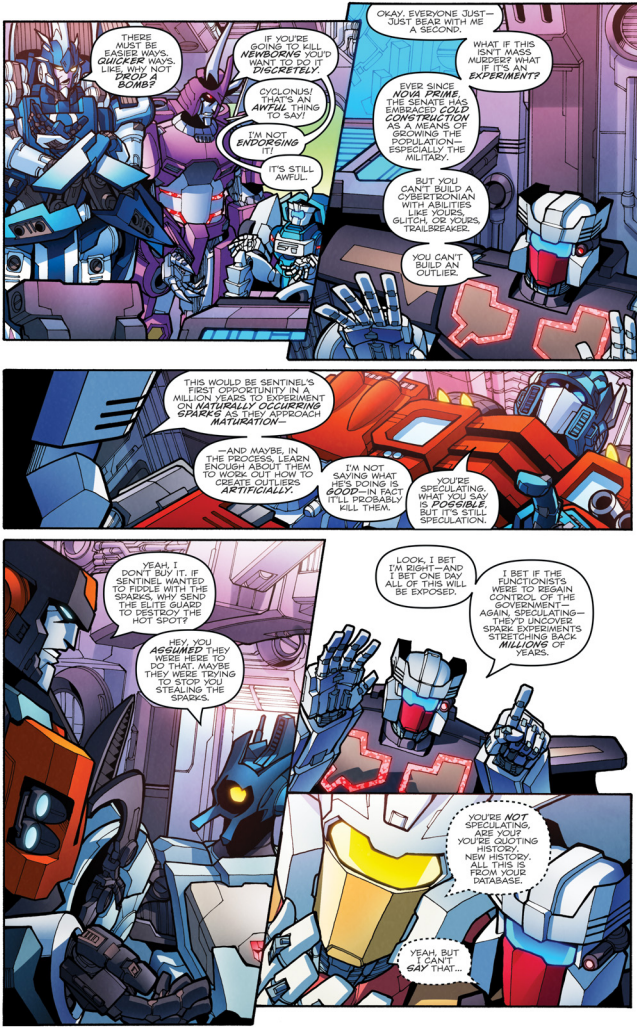
NOW THE RECHARGE SLAB IS FREE I WANT EVERYONE—INCLUDING THE NEW ARRIVALS—TO TOP THEMSELVES UP. WE NEED TO BE READY FOR THE NEXT ATTACK.
THAT'S IT? THAT'S THE PLAN?
WE REFUEL AND WAIT FOR THE ELITE GUARD TO COME BACK?
NO, GLITCH. WE REFUEL. WE SAVOR THE LULL—
—AND WE TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER.
MY NAME'S RODIMUS—
—AND I COULD REALLY DO WITH A QUIET WORD.
GOOD GRIEF. YOU'VE ADDED—WHAT IS IT?
C32?
SHHH! THE BIG GUY WOULDN'T APPROVE.
IT'S DANGEROUS. I KNOW ALL CIRCUIT SPEEDERS ARE DANGEROUS, BUT I WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF ONE DAY THEY LINK C32 TO INSTANT SPARK FAILURE.
MAYBE STICK TO REGULAR ENERGON?
I NEED SOMETHING WITH A LITTLE KICK. IT HELPS ME KEEP UP.
WITH WHOM, THE OUTLIERS?
DON'T JUDGE. NOT EVERYONE IS BORN SPECIAL.
BUT LOOK AT YOU—YOU'RE A POINT ONE PERCENTER. YOU WERE BORN SPECIAL!
I WAS BORN STRONG—AND THESE DAYS THAT ONLY GETS YOU SO FAR. I CAN'T MAKE FORCEFIELDS, OR STOP THINGS WORKING, OR—OR MAGNETIZE THE ENEMY.
PAX KEEPS ME AROUND BECAUSE WE'RE FRIENDS.
AND THAT'S A BAD REASON BECAUSE...?


BZZT BZZT
HELLO...?
OPTIMUS?
ORION. ORION PAX.
WHO IS THIS?
IT'S--
ME.
MEGATRON.
AH, YES. MEGATRON WITH AN "12." ARE YOU LOOKING FOR RODIMUS?
I WAS CALLING TO MAKE SURE HE'D ARRIVED SAFELY.
I'LL GET HIM FOR YOU.
NO, NO, IT'S ALRIGHT. IT CAN WAIT.
WHERE ARE YOU CALLING FROM? NOT MESSATINE, I PRESUME.
NO, I'M... WHERE AM I? 1ST CYCLE 502... I'VE RECENTLY BEEN TRANSFERRED TO CROTEUS 12.
SENATOR DECIMUS IS ABOUT TO CLOSE US DOWN.
HOW WAS MESSATINE?
I WORRY IT CHANGED ME.
I'M SURE IT DID. WE'RE ALL OF US THE SUM OF OUR EXPERIENCES.
YES, BUT "THE SUM" IMPLIES AN ACCUMULATION--AN AGGREGATION. WHAT IF SOMETHING GETS TAKEN AWAY? AND HOW WOULD YOU KNOW IF IT HAS?
I'M NOT SURE I FOLLOW.
I KNOW WHO I AM, ORION. BUT I DON'T NECESSARILY KNOW WHO I WAS.
I FIND IT HARD TO COMPARE THE TWO.


ARE YOU STILL WRITING?
NOT REALLY. NOT SO MUCH. THINGS GOT IN THE WAY.
WELL, DON'T GIVE UP. I'M SURE YOU STILL HAVE A LOT TO SAY. A LOT TO GIVE.
OH, I THINK I'VE GIVEN AS MUCH AS I CAN.
WHEN WERE YOU CREATED, 1ST CYCLE 0127 0137 IT WAS ON YOUR ARREST CARD.
EITHER WAY, YOU'RE STILL YOUNG. OLDER THAN ME. BUT... EVERYTHING'S STILL AHEAD OF YOU.
I WISH THAT WERE THE CASE... BUT I THINK WHAT WILL DEFINE ME IS BEHIND ME.
TEMPTING THOUGH. ISN'T IT, TO DO IT ALL AGAIN. TO DO IT DIFFERENTLY.
PROPERLY.
SOMETHING I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO ASK YOU...
YOU KNOW THE SENATE'S BROKEN. SO WHY NOT TEAR IT DOWN—ALL OF IT?
YOU COULD DO THAT, YOU AND YOUR MERRY BAND.
WHY RELY ON SOMEONE ELSE COMING ALONG AND DOING YOUR JOB FOR YOU—SOMEONE WHO MAY NOT ACTUALLY WANT THE JOB?
BECAUSE I DON'T BELIEVE ANYTHING NEEDS TO BE "TORN DOWN." REFORM IS THE ANSWER, NOT REVOLUTION.
I DON'T DENY THAT SENTINEL'S STEERED THE SENATE INTO DARKER WATERS—BUT WE NEED TO COURSE-CORRECT, NOT SINK THE SHIP.
HM.
PERHAPS, YOU'D BETTER PASS ME TO RODIMUS.
IF I MAY... BEFORE YOU GO...
WHAT?
YOU SOUND LOST.
LOST? OH, IT'S FAR WORSE THAN THAT.
HA!
NO, NO, NO. I KNOW EXACTLY WHERE I'M GOING. I DON'T KNOW IF I COULD TURN BACK NOW, EVEN IF I WANTED TO.
YOU COULD ALWAYS JOIN US. JOIN ME.
WHY IS THAT FUNNY?
IT'S NOT FUNNY AT ALL. IT'S TRAGIC.
WELL THEN? WILL YOU JOIN US?
I THINK SO.
EVENTUALLY.
"SO ARE WE CLEAR?"

YEE-AH, NOT *REALLY*...
I CAN'T GO INTO ANY MORE DETAIL, JUST—IF IN THE FUTURE—
COULD BE TODAY, COULD BE TOMORROW, COULD BE *FOUR MILLION YEARS FROM NOW*—
BUT IF IN THE FUTURE YOU FIND YOURSELF ON A PLANET CALLED *OFSTED XVII*, DON'T LEAVE YOUR SHIP. I MEAN IT.
DON'T GO OUTSIDE. *DON'T* ENGAGE WITH ANYBODY, AND *DON'T* DONATE FUEL TO ANYONE.
WILL YOU DO THAT FOR ME? IT'S VERY IMPORTANT.
SURE, WHATEVER.
TRAILBREAKER.
OFSTED XVII. STAY INSIDE THE SHIP. GOT IT.
YOU'RE A GOOD PERSON.
YOUR FRIEND'S ON THE LINE.
ULTRA MAGNUS?
MEGATRON.
AH YES, MEGATRON. GOOD OLD MEGATRON.
WHO WAS THAT?
MEGATRON. THE MINER FROM TARN. REMARKABLE INDIVIDUAL.
THE ACTIVIST? "YOU ARE BEING DECEIVED" AND ALL THAT?
YOU SHOULD READ HIM.
IT'S POWERFUL STUFF.

HEY, BEST FRIEND! MISS YOU!
SHUT UP AND GIVE ME A PROGRESS REPORT.
NO SIGN OF BRAINSTORM, ALTHOUGH THIS GIANT... *THING* APPEARED IN THE SKY A FEW HOURS AGO. VERY SUS.
"SUS?"
SUSPICIOUS.
PERCEPTOR MAINTAINS THAT GIVEN TIME, HE CAN PINPOINT OUR ERRANT CREW-MEMBER'S *EXACT* LOCATION.
IT DIDN'T HELP THAT THE TRAVEL APPARATUS *OVERHEATED* WHEN YOU JUMPED.
OVERHEATED?
WE THINK IT'S STRUGGLING TO MOVE AROUND *TWO* SETS OF TIME TRAVELLERS. WE DON'T KNOW HOW MANY JUMPS YOU'VE GOT LEFT—OR BRAINSTORM, FOR THAT MATTER.
AND THE WHOLE EXERCISE IS SUCKING *HUGE* AMOUNTS OF ENERGY FROM THE QUANTUM ENGINES.
OKAY, BUT OTHERWISE YOU THREE HAVE THINGS UNDER CONTROL...
OF COURSE. PERCEPTOR WAS A LITTLE CONCERNED ABOUT THE *BACKGROUND RADIATION*, BUT THAT SEEMS TO BE LEAKING FROM THE *PAST* INTO THE *PRESENT*, RATHER THAN THE OTHER WAY ROUND.
WELL, SO LONG AS—
WAIT, *WHAT* DID YOU JUST SAY?
RADIATION?
FEGGILE RADIATION, TO BE PRECISE. IT'S COMING FROM *UP THERE*—FROM THE *SKY PLATFORM*.
I THINK THE SENATE IS TRYING TO *STERILIZE* THE HOT SPOT, SNUFF OUT THE SPARKS.


THERE MUST BE EASIER WAYS, QUICKER WAYS. LIKE, WHY NOT DROP A BOMB?
IF YOU'RE GOING TO KILL NEWBORNS YOU'D WANT TO DO IT DISCRETELY.
CYCLONUS! THAT'S AN AWFUL THING TO SAY!
I'M NOT ENDORSING IT!
IT'S STILL AWFUL.
OKAY. EVERYONE JUST—JUST BEAR WITH ME A SECOND.
WHAT IF THIS ISN'T MASS MURDER? WHAT IF IT'S AN EXPERIMENT?
EVER SINCE NOVA PRIME, THE SENATE HAS EMBRACED COLD CONSTRUCTION AS A MEANS OF GROWING THE POPULATION, ESPECIALLY THE MILITARY.
BUT YOU CAN'T BUILD A CYBERTRONIAN WITH ABILITIES LIKE YOURS, GLITCH, OR YOURS, TRAILBREAKER.
YOU CAN'T BUILD AN OUTLIER.
THIS WOULD BE SENTINEL'S FIRST OPPORTUNITY IN A MILLION YEARS TO EXPERIMENT ON NATURALLY OCCURRING SPARKS AS THEY APPROACH MATURATION—
—AND MAYBE, IN THE PROCESS, LEARN ENOUGH ABOUT THEM TO WORK OUT HOW TO CREATE OUTLIERS ARTIFICIALLY.
I'M NOT SAYING WHAT HE'S DOING IS GOOD—IN FACT IT'LL PROBABLY KILL THEM.
YOU'RE SPECULATING. WHAT YOU SAY IS POSSIBLE, BUT IT'S STILL SPECULATION.
YEAH, I DON'T BUY IT. IF SENTINEL WANTED TO FIDDLE WITH THE SPARKS, WHY SEND THE ELITE GUARD TO DESTROY THE HOT SPOT?
HEY, YOU ASSUMED THEY WERE HERE TO DO THAT. MAYBE THEY WERE TRYING TO STOP YOU STEALING THE SPARKS.
LOOK, I BET I'M RIGHT—AND I BET ONE DAY ALL OF THIS WILL BE EXPOSED.
I BET IF THE FUNCTIONISTS WERE TO REGAIN CONTROL OF THE GOVERNMENT—AGAIN, SPECULATING—THEY'D UNCOVER SPARK EXPERIMENTS STRETCHING BACK MILLIONS OF YEARS.
YOU'RE NOT SPECULATING, ARE YOU? YOU'RE QUOTING HISTORY. NEW HISTORY. ALL THIS IS FROM YOUR DATABASE.
YEAH, BUT I CAN'T SAY THAT...

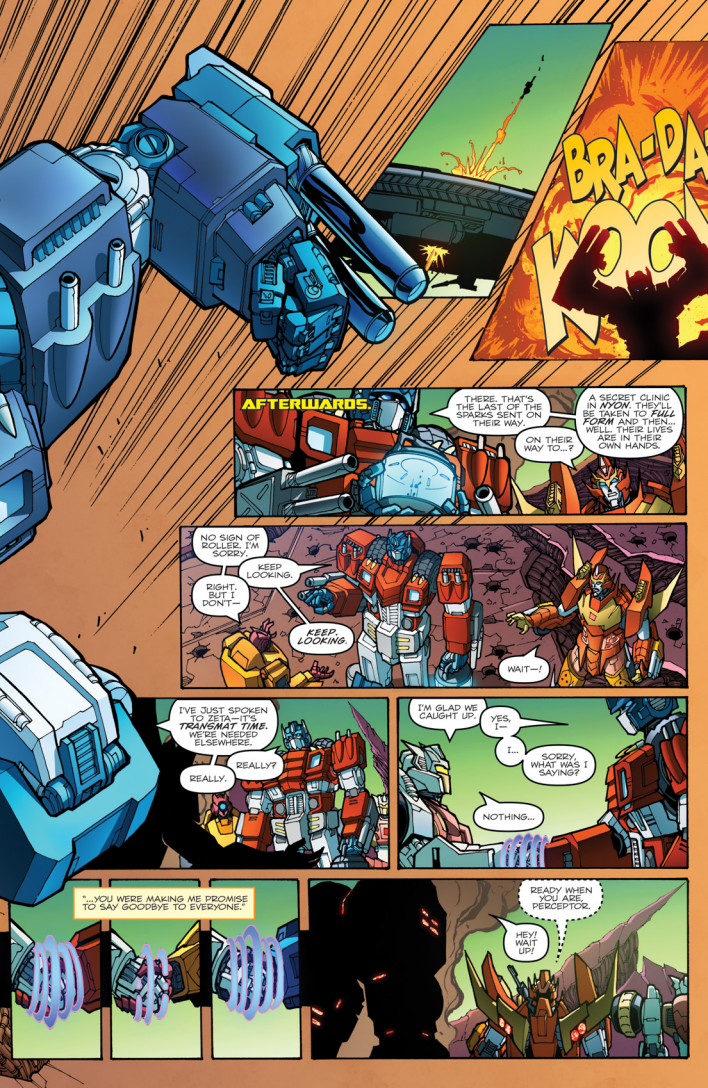
EVERYONE OUTSIDE. NOW.
WE CAN'T SAY FOR CERTAIN WHO'S UP TO WHAT, LET ALONE WHY. BUT WE CAN'T RISK DOING NOTHING.
TOTALLY AGREE—BUT I THINK YOU SHOULD STAY HERE, INSIDE, WHERE IT'S SAFE.
IF EVER YOUR LIFE'S BEEN IN DANGER, IT'S NOW.
TRAILBREAKER, I WANT YOU TO—
OH, SO YOU'RE JUST GOING TO IGNORE ME.
I THOUGHT YOU WERE JOKING, AND YES.
TRAILBREAKER, AS SOON AS WE'RE ON THE HOT SPOT I WANT YOU TO GENERATE A FORCEFIELD—
"—AND MAKE IT AS BIG AS YOU CAN."
CLEARLY.
I THINK ORION WAS REFERRING TO THE SPARKS.
WWHIRRR

IS EVERYONE INSIDE?
THERE ARE STILL SOME ON THE OUTSIDE. I'M SORRY—IF I MAKE THIS FORCEFIELD ANY BIGGER IT WON'T DEFLECT THE RADIATION.
Y'KNOW, FROM WHERE I'M STANDING THAT SKY PLATFORM DOESN'T LOOK *QUITE* SO INNOCUOUS...

HARVEST TIME.
WHAT'S THAT, AN INCUBATOR?
TELEPORTER. SENDS THE SPARK TO A SAFE HOUSE WHERE IT CAN BE NURTURED.
GIVE IT HERE.
NUH-UH.
IT'S NOT SAFE OUT THERE. I'LL DEAL WITH THE SPARKS.
THE HELL YOU WILL.
ROLLER—
SORRY, BIG GUY—I NEED THIS.
OF ALL THE—
BZZT BZZT
CAN THIS WAIT? HANDS VERY MUCH FULL AT THE MOMENT...
BRAINSTORM'S TIME-JUMPED.
WHAT, AGAIN? WHERE?!
FURTHER INTO THE PAST. I'M PULLING YOU OUT OF THERE.
YOU CAN'T— NOT YET. A FEW MORE MINUTES, THAT'S ALL WE NEED...
"...LIVES DEPEND ON IT."
KOOM
CHOOM CHOOM
UH.

AS SOON AS THIS IS OVER, WE'RE JUMPING. NOW, YOU AND I TALKED ABOUT GOODBYES...
YOU SAID THERE WAS A WAY TO WIPE SOMEONE'S MEMORY—
WITHOUT INJECTING THEM, I KNOW. I'VE MADE SOME ADJUSTMENTS. WON'T BE THE SAME AS GOING THROUGH THE NECK, BUT IT'LL DO THE JOB. ONE HANDSHAKE AND THEY'LL FORGET THE LAST COUPLE OF SUB-CYCLES— AND THE NEXT COUPLE...
I'VE BEEN THINKING—AND I DON'T WANT YOU TO SAY GOODBYE TO TRAILBREAKER. IF YOU SHOOK HIS HAND YOU MIGHT SHORT OUT HIS FORCEFIELD GENERATOR— FOREVER.
I REALLY DON'T THINK THAT'S A RISK.
IT'S NOT A RISK. IT'S AN ORDER: DON'T TOUCH TRAILBREAKER. UNDERSTOOD?
OH, MAN. I THINK ROLLER'S IN TROUBLE.
THAT'S IT. THAT'S ENOUGH. THIS ENDS NOW.
TRAILBREAKER. WHEN I SAY THE WORD I WANT YOU TO PUT YOUR FORCEFIELD AROUND ME.
JUST YOU?
JUST ME. TIGHTER THE BETTER.
WINDCHARGER— HOW'S YOUR THROWING ARM?
MY WHAT? WHAT DO YOU...? OH, I GET IT.

NOW.
TRAILBREAKER!
WANT ME TO AIM FOR ANYTHING IN PARTICULAR?
JUST MAKE SURE I *CONNECT*.
ALRIGHTY THEN...
...OFF YOU GO!
THIS IS THE GREATEST THING I HAVE EVER SEEN.


BRA-DA
KO
AFTERWARDS.
THERE, THAT'S THE LAST OF THE SPARKS SENT ON THEIR WAY.
ON THEIR WAY TO...?
A SECRET CLINIC IN WYOM. THEY'LL BE TAKEN TO FULL FORM AND THEN... WELL. THEIR LIVES ARE IN THEIR OWN HANDS.
NO SIGN OF ROLLER. I'M SORRY.
KEEP LOOKING.
RIGHT, BUT I DON'T—
KEEP LOOKING.
WAIT—!
I'VE JUST SPOKEN TO ZETA—IT'S TRANSMAT TIME. WE'RE NEEDED ELSEWHERE.
REALLY?
REALLY.
I'M GLAD WE CAUGHT UP.
YES, I—
I...
SORRY. WHAT WAS I SAYING?
NOTHING...
"...YOU WERE MAKING ME PROMISE TO SAY GOODBYE TO EVERYONE."
READY WHEN YOU ARE, PERCEPTOR.
HEY! WAIT UP!

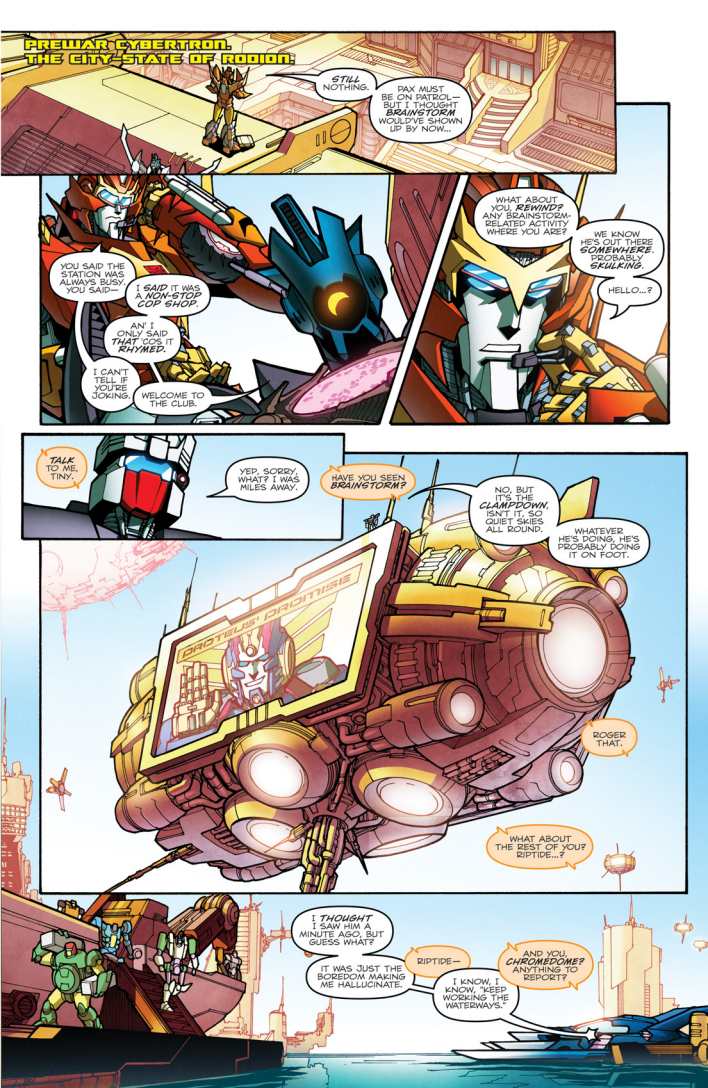
DON'T FORGET ABOUT ME!
ER–
NO!
TRAILBREAKER!
WHAT WAS ALL THAT ABOUT?
WHAT WAS *WHAT* ALL ABOUT?
I'M... NOT SURE. WHAT WAS THE QUESTION?
WHATEVER IT WAS, I'VE GOT A *BETTER ONE.*
WHO WANTS TO GO FOR A DRINK?

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #36 COVER B

by **NICK ROCHE** Colors by **JOSH BURCHAM**

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #37 COVER A

by **ALEX MILNE** Colors by **JOSH PEREZ**


PREWAR: CYBERTRON, THE CITY-STATE OF RODION:
STILL NOTHING.
PAX MUST BE ON PATROL— BUT I THOUGHT BRAINSTORM WOULD'VE SHOWN UP BY NOW...
YOU SAID THE STATION WAS ALWAYS BUSY, YOU SAID—
I SAID IT WAS A NON-STOP COP SHOP.
AN' I ONLY SAID THAT 'COS IT RHYMED.
I CAN'T TELL IF YOU'RE JOKING.
WELCOME TO THE CLUB.
WHAT ABOUT YOU, REWIND? ANY BRAINSTORM-RELATED ACTIVITY WHERE YOU ARE?
WE KNOW HE'S OUT THERE SOMEWHERE. PROBABLY SKULKING.
HELLO...?
TALK TO ME, TINY.
YEP, SORRY, WHAT? I WAS MILES AWAY.
HAVE YOU SEEN BRAINSTORM?
NO, BUT IT'S THE CLAMPDOWN, ISN'T IT. SO QUIET SKIES ALL ROUND.
WHATEVER HE'S DOING, HE'S PROBABLY DOING IT ON FOOT.
PROTEUS' PROMISE
ROGER THAT.
WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF YOU? RIPTIDE...?
I THOUGHT I SAW HIM A MINUTE AGO, BUT GUESS WHAT?
IT WAS JUST THE BOREDOM MAKING ME HALLUCINATE.
RIPTIDE—
I KNOW, I KNOW, "KEEP WORKING THE WATERWAYS."
AND YOU, CHROMEDOME? ANYTHING TO REPORT?

YES: MY DEEP AND ABIDING *UNEASE*.

WHAT'S UP?

I FEEL CONSPICUOUS. A 'BOT WITH *WHEELS ON HIS SHOULDERS* SHOULD NOT BE RIDING THE TRANSIT TRACKS. I COULD GET *FINED* FOR NEGLECTING MY ALT MODE...

SO GET OFF THE TRACKS...! THERE ARE OTHER WAYS TO *SNOOP*.

IF I GET OFF I COULD RUN INTO MY *PAST SELF*.

IT WASN'T AN ISSUE WHEN WE WERE OUT IN THE STICKS,* BUT *HERE?* THIS WAS MY *PRECINCT*.

PROWL AND I *LIVED* ON THESE STREETS.

YOU'RE OKAY—YOU HAVEN'T EVEN BEEN YET!

P.R.: PRE-RODIMUS, MAYBE *THAT'S* WHY IT'S SO QUIET...

*SEE LAST ISSUE.

COME ON, CYCLONUS. GIVE ME SOME GOOD NEWS.

CYCLONUS?

IS IT THE *TIME TRAVEL?* 'COS I'M ONLY JUST WRAPPING MY HEAD AROUND IT MYSELF. I MEAN *THINK ABOUT IT*: I'M SOMEWHERE OUT THERE RIGHT NOW, BURIED UNDERGROUND!

ME!

UNDERGROUND! RIGHT NOW! ME!

THE WAY I SEE IT, YOU JUST HAVE TO ACCEPT WHAT'S HAPPENING AS SOMETHING THAT'S... HAPPENING.

AND I THINK THAT'S TRUE OF SO MANY THINGS IN LIFE.

IT'S BEAUTIFUL...

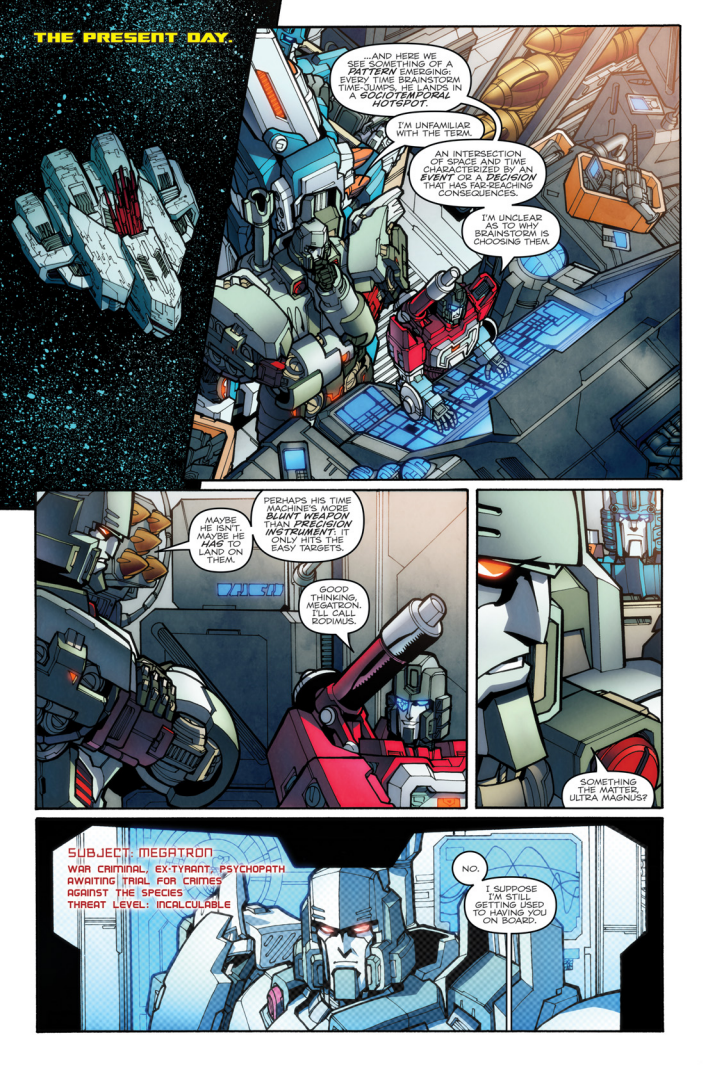
OH, RODION.

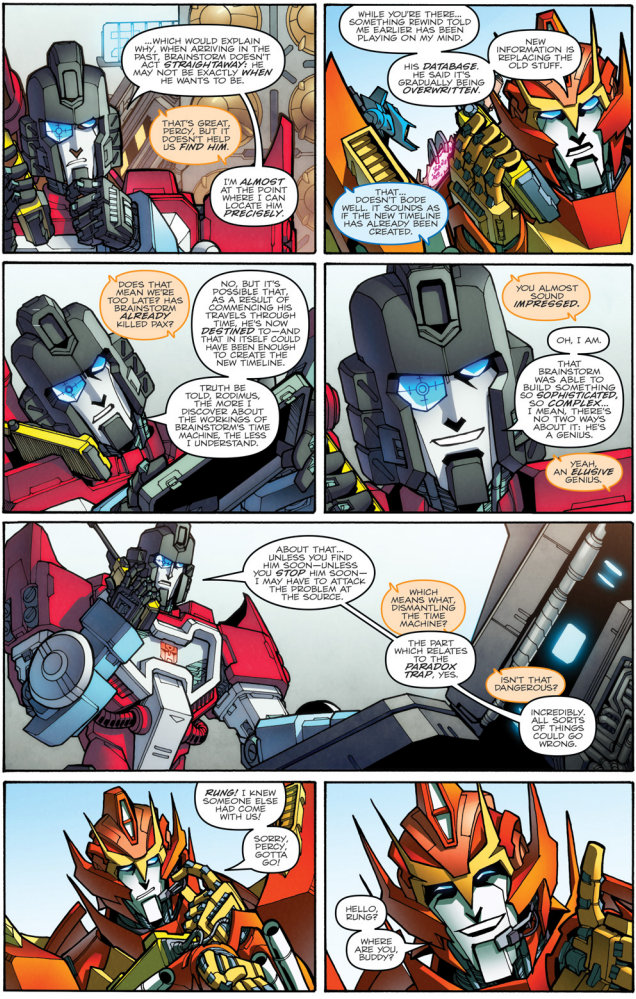
CYBERTRON.

YES, WELL... *UM*... DRINK IT IN, I GUESS.

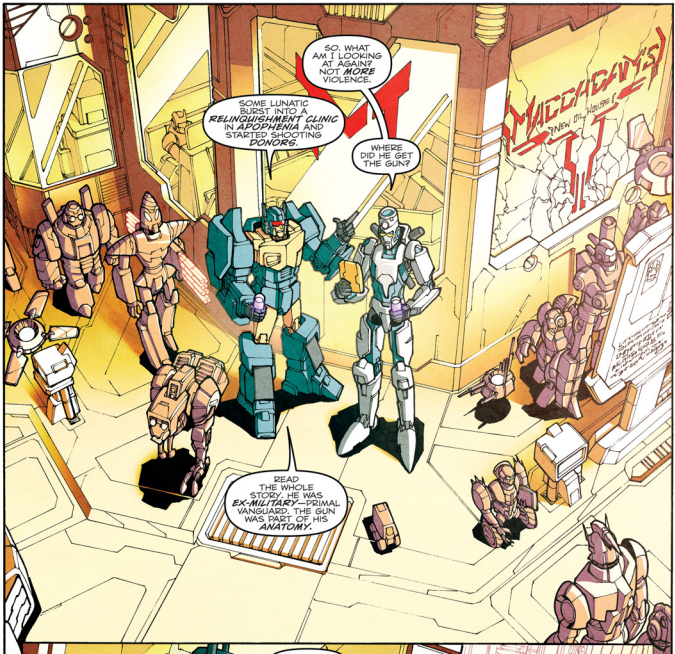
IT'S BEEN SO *LONG*, SO LONG SINCE I SAW IT AS IT *SHOULD* BE SEEN...

C-131:
WHAT IS IT WITH EVERYONE TODAY?
HERE, LET ME JUST...
ALRIGHT? IT'S NOT CYCLONUS, IT'S ME. IT'S TAILGATE.
CYCLONUS IS A BIT PREOCCUPIED.
...
REPAIRS! THAT'S IT. WE JUST SET DOWN FOR REPAIRS. WE'RE... REPAIRING.
BUT WE'RE FINE. EVERYTHING'S FINE. NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT. NO SIGN OF BRAINSTORM. WE JUST NEED A MOMENT TO SORT OUT THOSE REPAIRS I MENTIONED?
SO... TAILGATE OUT, I GUESS.
I'M SORRY.
NOTEP.


THE PRESENT DAY.
...AND HERE WE SEE SOMETHING OF A PATTERN EMERGING. EVERY TIME BRAINSTORM TIME-JUMPS, HE LANDS IN A SOCIOTEMPORAL HOTSPOT.
I'M UNFAMILIAR WITH THE TERM.
AN INTERSECTION OF SPACE AND TIME CHARACTERIZED BY AN EVENT OR A DECISION THAT HAS FAR-REACHING CONSEQUENCES.
I'M UNCLEAR AS TO WHY BRAINSTORM IS CHOOSING THEM.
MAYBE HE ISN'T. MAYBE HE HAS TO LAND ON THEM.
PERHAPS HIS TIME MACHINE'S MORE BLUNDERBUSS THAN PRECISION INSTRUMENT. IT ONLY HITS THE EASY TARGETS.
GOOD THINKING, MEGATRON. I'LL CALL RODIMUS.
SOMETHING THE MATTER, ULTRA MAGNUS?
SUBJECT: MEGATRON
WAR CRIMINAL, EX-TYRANT, PSYCHOPATH
AWAITING TRIAL FOR CRIMES AGAINST THE SPECIES
THREAT LEVEL: INCALCULABLE
NO.
I SUPPOSE I'M STILL GETTING USED TO HAVING YOU ON BOARD.


...WHICH WOULD EXPLAIN WHY, WHEN ARRIVING IN THE PAST, BRAINSTORM DOESN'T ACT STRAIGHTAWAY; HE MAY NOT BE EXACTLY WHEN HE WANTS TO BE.
THAT'S GREAT, PERCY, BUT IT DOESN'T HELP US FIND HIM.
I'M ALMOST AT THE POINT WHERE I CAN LOCATE HIM PRECISELY.
WHILE YOU'RE THERE... SOMETHING REWIND TOLD ME EARLIER HAS BEEN PLAYING ON MY MIND.
NEW INFORMATION IS REPLACING THE OLD STUFF.
HIS DATABASE. HE SAID IT'S GRADUALLY BEING OVERWRITTEN.
THAT... DOESN'T BODE WELL. IT SOUNDS AS IF THE NEW TIMELINE HAS ALREADY BEEN CREATED.
DOES THAT MEAN WE'RE TOO LATE? HAS BRAINSTORM ALREADY KILLED PAX?
NO, BUT IT'S POSSIBLE THAT, AS A RESULT OF COMMENCING HIS TRAVELS THROUGH TIME, HE'S NOW DESTINED TO—AND THAT IN ITSELF COULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH TO CREATE THE NEW TIMELINE.
TRUTH BE TOLD, RODIMUS, THE MORE I DISCOVER ABOUT THE WORKINGS OF BRAINSTORM'S TIME MACHINE, THE LESS I UNDERSTAND.
YOU ALMOST SOUND IMPRESSED.
OH, I AM.
THAT BRAINSTORM WAS ABLE TO BUILD SOMETHING SO SOPHISTICATED, SO COMPLEX... I MEAN, THERE'S NO TWO WAYS ABOUT IT: HE'S A GENIUS.
YEAH, AN ELUSIVE GENIUS.
ABOUT THAT... UNLESS YOU FIND HIM SOON—UNLESS YOU STOP HIM SOON—I MAY HAVE TO ATTACK THE PROBLEM AT THE SOURCE.
WHICH MEANS WHAT, DISMANTLING THE TIME MACHINE?
THE PART WHICH RELATES TO THE PARADOX TRAP, YES.
ISN'T THAT DANGEROUS?
INCREDIBLY. ALL SORTS OF THINGS COULD GO WRONG.
RUNG! I KNEW SOMEONE ELSE HAD COME WITH US!
SORRY, PERCY. GOTTA GO!
HELLO, RUNG? WHERE ARE YOU, BUDDY?

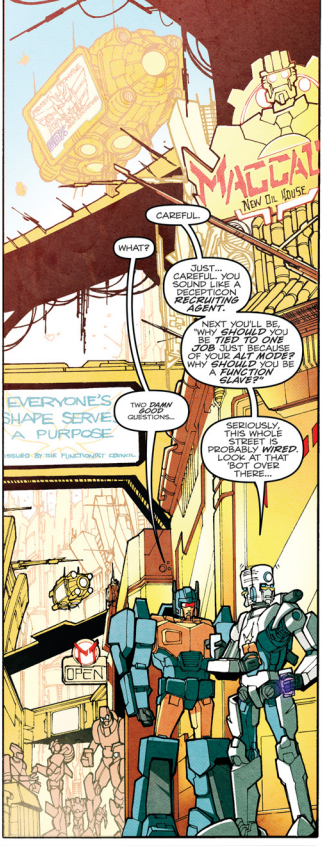
EXACTLY. WHERE YOU TOLD ME TO BE: *MAGGAPAW'S OIL HOUSE*. AND I MUST ADMIT I'M FEELING RATHER *EXPOSED*.
EXPOSED? NO OFFENSE, BUT YOU COULDN'T DRAW ATTENTION TO YOURSELF IF YOU *TRIED*, EVEN *MIRRORS* IGNORE YOU.
YES, BUT THE RUNG OF THIS ERA WORKS NEARBY. I KEEP SEEING PEOPLE I KNOW—OR PEOPLE I *WILL* KNOW.
CASE IN POINT: *NIGHTBEAT'S* OUTSIDE AS WE SPEAK. HE'S WITH HIS SCIENCE FRIEND. (QWEZTY? QUARK?)
IF HE TALKS TO ME *NOW*, BEFORE WE'RE DESTINED TO *MEET*, IT MIGHT—
SHHHH. *RELAX*. PLAY WITH YOUR TOYS OR SOMETHING. ALL YOU NEED TO DO IS KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR BRAINSTORM...
...AND BLEND IN.
DAMMIT.


SO, WHAT AM I LOOKING AT AGAIN? NOT *MORE* VIOLENCE.
SOME LUNATIC BURST INTO A *RELINQUISHMENT CLINIC* IN *APOPHENIA* AND STARTED SHOOTING *DONORS*.
WHERE DID HE GET THE GUN?
MACCAGAY'S
READ THE WHOLE STORY. HE WAS *EX-MILITARY*--PRIMAL VANGUARD. THE GUN WAS PART OF HIS *ANATOMY*.

SOUNDS LIKE ONE OF THOSE RECEPTICON FANATICS.
IT'S "*D*-*DE*-CEPTICON, AFTER THEIR *SLOGAN*: "YOU ARE BEING DECEIVED."
THANK YOU, *NIGHTBEAT*. I STAND *IMMEDIATELY* CORRECTED.

I *KNEW* YOU'D BLAME THE DECEPTICONS. YOU SOUND LIKE THE SENATE USED TO, BEFORE THE *U-TURN*.
I'M NO FAN OF THE SENATE. THEY SAID *THE CLAMPDOWN* WOULD MAKE CYBERTRON *SAFE*.

THE CLAMPDOWN IS *INSANELY* COUNTERPRODUCTIVE. THE *CURFEWS*, THE *SKY SPIES*... AND PRIMUS HELP YOU IF YOU'VE GOT A *TARWAN ACCENT*.
YOU PUSH THE PUBLIC TOO FAR AND THEY'LL *PUSH BACK*.


CAREFUL.
WHAT?
JUST... CAREFUL... YOU SOUND LIKE A DECEPTICON RECRUITING AGENT.
NEXT YOU'LL BE, "WHY SHOULD YOU BE TIED TO ONE JOB JUST BECAUSE OF YOUR ALT MODE? WHY SHOULD YOU BE A FUNCTION SLAVE?"
TWO DAMN GOOD QUESTIONS...
SERIOUSLY. THIS WHOLE STREET IS PROBABLY WIRED. LOOK AT THAT 'BOT OVER THERE...
EVERYONE'S SHAPE SERVE A PURPOSE
ISSUED BY THE FUNCTIONIST COUNCIL
OPEN

"...YOU'RE TELLING ME THOSE EYEBROWS AREN'T SECRET RECORDING DEVICES? THAT GUY SCREAMS GOVERNMENT PLANT."
"NO, QUARK. THAT GUY SCREAMS LONELY."

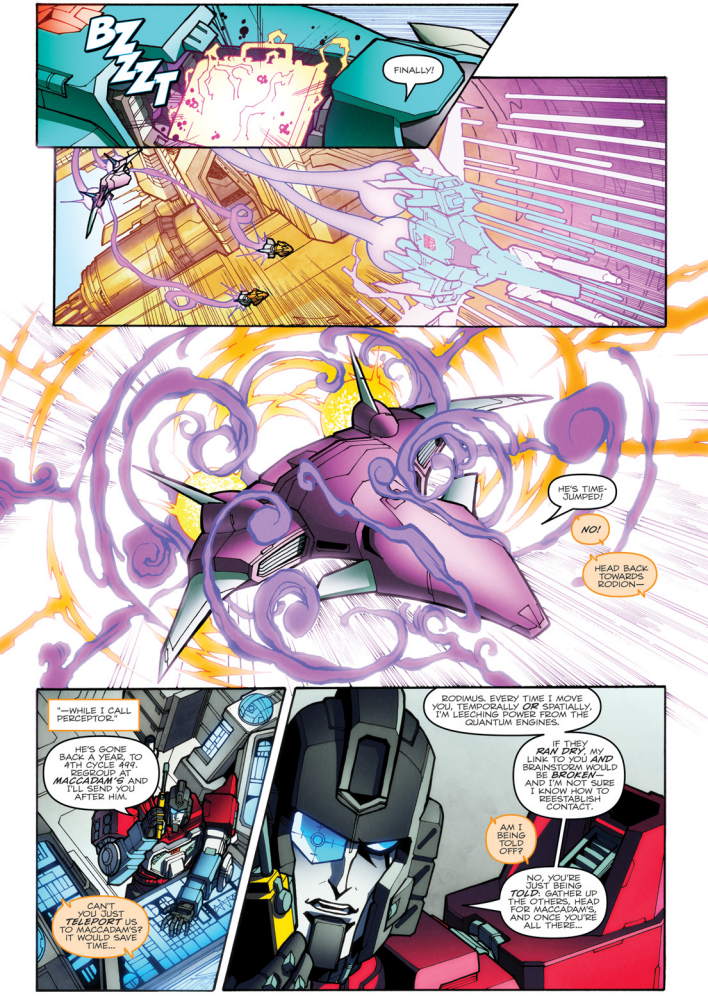
ANYWAY, SHUT UP.
I'M NOT ABOUT TO RUN OFF AND UPLOAD THE DECEPTICON MANIFESTO. SO DON'T HAVE ONE OF YOUR FREAKY FREAK OUTS.

YES, WELL, WE'LL SEE WHICH OF US IS RIGHT WHEN THEY REACH THE MAGIC NUMBER.
WHAT, "PROTEUS' PROMISE"? NOT GONNA HAPPEN. AND IF IT DOES, SO WHAT?
YOU SAY THAT NOW—ONCE THE DECEPTICONS TAKE OVER, WE'RE DEAD. WE'RE NOT THEIR TYPE.

THEY HAVE A TYPE?
OF COURSE. THEY HAVE A—THE MANUAL CLASSES! CONSTRUCTIBOTS, MINERS, HAULERS... THE DIRTIER YOUR JOB, THE GREATER YOUR CHANCES OF SURVIVAL.
AND YOU SERIOUSLY BELIEVE THIS?

LOOK. I'M SCIENTIFIC CLASS. I TURN INTO A PROTON MICROSCOPE—THE FUNCTIONISTS ALLOW ME A DEGREE OF OCCUPATIONAL FREEDOM BECAUSE WHAT I DO IS SEEN TO HAVE ADDED VALUE.
COME THE REVOLUTION, THE DECEPTICONS WILL FORCE EVERYONE TO CHANGE SHAPE...

"...AND ANYONE WITHOUT A DRILL BIT OR A SCOOP WILL BE SHOT ON THE SPOT."
I CAN SEE HIM!
RODIMUS! I CAN SEE BRAINSTORM! HE'S FLYING WESTWARDS, TOWARDS THE DEAD END!
CYCLONUS—YOU'RE OUT WEST. CAN YOU INTERCEPT?
ON IT.
HE'S IN MY SIGHTS. DO I SHOOT TO KILL?
RODIMUS? DO I SHOOT TO KILL?
YES.
SERIOUSLY?!
I—
OKAY, YOU'RE RIGHT. GROUND HIM. DON'T KILL HIM—TAKE HIM DOWN.


BZZZT
FINALLY!
HE'S TIME-JUMPED!
NO!
HEAD BACK TOWARDS RODION—
"—WHILE I CALL PERCEPTOR."
HE'S GONE BACK A YEAR, TO 4TH CYCLE 449. REGROUP AT MACCADAM'S AND I'LL SEND YOU AFTER HIM.
CAN'T YOU JUST TELEPORT US TO MACCADAM'S? IT WOULD SAVE TIME...
RODIMUS. EVERY TIME I MOVE YOU, TEMPORALLY OR SPATIALLY, I'M LEECHING POWER FROM THE QUANTUM ENGINES.
IF THEY RAN DRY, MY LINK TO YOU AND BRAINSTORM WOULD BE BROKEN— AND I'M NOT SURE I KNOW HOW TO REESTABLISH CONTACT.
AM I BEING TOLD OFF?
NO, YOU'RE JUST BEING TOLD. GATHER UP THE OTHERS, HEAD FOR MACCADAM'S, AND ONCE YOU'RE ALL THERE...

"...I'LL SEND YOU BACK."

OKAY, AS ENTRANCES GO THAT WAS ONLY *SLIGHTLY* LESS CONSPICUOUS THAN PROJECTING *YOUR ATTENTION PLEASE* ONTO A MUSHROOM CLOUD.

NEEDLES IS RIGHT. SEVEN GOOD-LOOKING MECHS AND RIPTIDE JUST EXPLODED ONTO A CITY STREET. WE NEED A PLAUSIBLE EXPLANATION.

SORRY, "NEEDLES"...?

WHAT ARE YOU ALL TALKING ABOUT?

WE'RE STILL OUTSIDE MACCADAMS! WE HAVEN'T MOVED!

EXPERIMENTAL TRANSMAT. WHAT DO YOU THINK, RODIMUS? EXPERIMENTAL TRANSMAT...?

THINK I'M PAST...

NO, WAIT. I *AM* PAST CARING.

Elegant CHAOS

PART 2: STET

ACTUALLY, RIPTIDE, WE *HAVE* LOOK. THIS WINDOW WAS BROKEN WHEN WE LEFT.

THIS DOES APPEAR TO BE 4TH CYCLE *AW*.

WHAT NOW, PERCY?

STAY PUT. YOU'RE *EXACTLY* WHERE BRAINSTORM CHOSE TO LAND. I DON'T KNOW WHY, BUT MACCADAMS MATTERS.

BUT PAX IS STATIONED *MILES* AWAY. HOW CAN WE STOP HIM GETTING HURT WE'RE *HERE?*

RODIMUS? IT'S ULTRA MAGNUS SPEAKING.

LISTEN, WHATEVER I'VE DONE IT WAS AN ACCIDENT AND I'M SORRY.

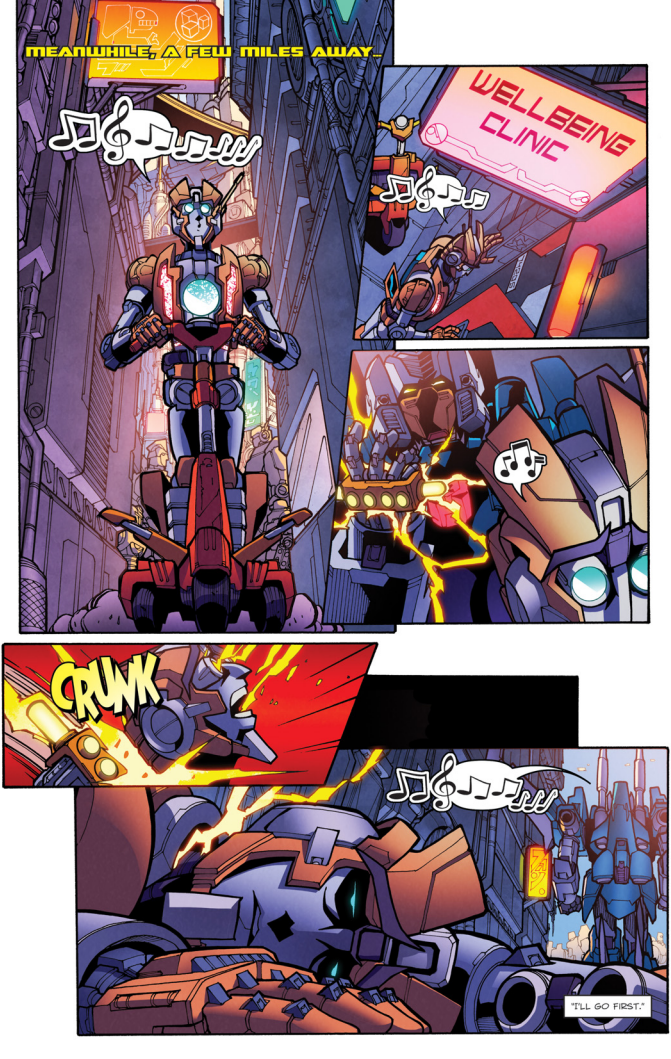
THE *BIG PICTURE:* BRAINSTORM TRYING TO KILL PAX.

WE DREW IT AT SPEED BECAUSE WE *HAD TO*. BUT THE MORE WE LOOK AT IT, THE LESS IT MAKES SENSE.

MAGNUS, THE *LAST* THING I WANT TO DO IS TO DISSUADE YOU FROM EXPLORING THE POWER OF METAPHOR, BUT I REALLY DON'T HAVE THE SLIGHTEST IDEA WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.

TELL PERCY WE'LL SPLIT INTO TWO TEAMS. ONE TEAM CAN STAY HERE. THE OTHER CAN WATCH RODION POLICE HEADQUARTERS.

THAT WAY, *EVERYBODY'S* HAPPY...


MEANWHILE, A FEW MILES AWAY...
WELLBEING CLINIC
CRUNK
"I'LL GO FIRST."

NEAR RODION POLICE HQ.

OKAY, *THAT* ONE—THE BRIGHT ONE, IMAGINE THAT'S THE CORNER OF PROWL'S MOUTH—THE *TWITCHY* CORNER—

—AND THE STAR *NEXT* TO IT IS THE TIP OF HIS *CHIN*.

AND IF YOU JOIN ALL *THOSE* STARS TOGETHER... IF YOU DO *THAT*... TA-DAH! IT LOOKS LIKE YOU WITH A GIRDER, CREEPING UP BEHIND HIM!

YOUR TURN.

HE'S UP THERE, CHROMEDOME, SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE STARS.

YOU'RE ALLOWED TO SAY HIS *NAME* YOU KNOW. *DOMINUS AMBUS*. I'M NOT—

I'M BETTER THAN I USED TO BE.

AND I'M UP THERE *WITH HIM*. LOOKING FOR A MOON WE'LL NEVER FIND.

THE OTHER CHROMEDOME, FROM THE OTHER *LOST LIGHT*... DID THE TWO OF YOU EVER TALK ABOUT DOMINUS?

REALLY TALK? I DON'T THINK SO. WHY?

I DON'T KNOW. WONDERING.

OKAY SO LISTEN. I'VE BEEN THINKING. IF WE BORROWED THE *TIME-CASE*—

WHEN DID WE START CALLING IT A TIME-CASE?

SHUSH. IF WE BORROWED IT, WE COULD FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO DOMINUS...!

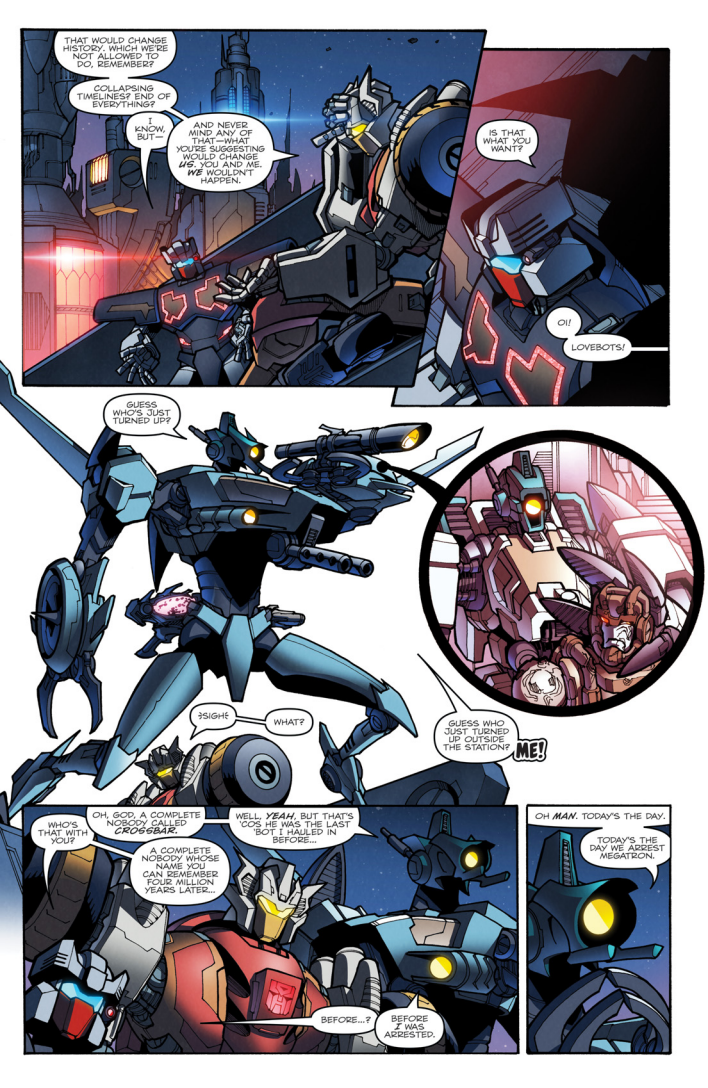
FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM.

YES!

YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO *STOP IT*, WHATEVER IT WAS?

I—

WELL I MEAN IF IT TURNS OUT THAT HE WAS HURT OR—OR *KILLED*, THEN *YES*, OF COURSE I'D WANT TO STOP IT.


THAT WOULD CHANGE HISTORY, WHICH WE'RE NOT ALLOWED TO DO, REMEMBER?
COLLAPSING TIMELINES? END OF EVERYTHING?
I KNOW, BUT—
AND NEVER MIND ANY OF THAT—WHAT YOU'RE SUGGESTING WOULD CHANGE *US*, YOU AND ME. *WE* WOULDN'T HAPPEN.
IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT?
OI!
LOVEBOTS!
GUESS WHO'S JUST TURNED UP?
GUESS WHO JUST TURNED UP OUTSIDE THE STATION?
ME!
SIGH!
WHAT?
WHO'S THAT WITH YOU?
OH, GOD, A COMPLETE NOBODY CALLED *CROSSBAR*.
A COMPLETE NOBODY WHOSE NAME YOU CAN REMEMBER FOUR MILLION YEARS LATER...
WELL, *YEAH*, BUT THAT'S 'COS HE WAS THE LAST 'BOT I HAULED IN BEFORE...
BEFORE...?
BEFORE *I* WAS ARRESTED.
OH *MAN*. TODAY'S THE DAY.
TODAY'S THE DAY WE ARREST MEGATRON.

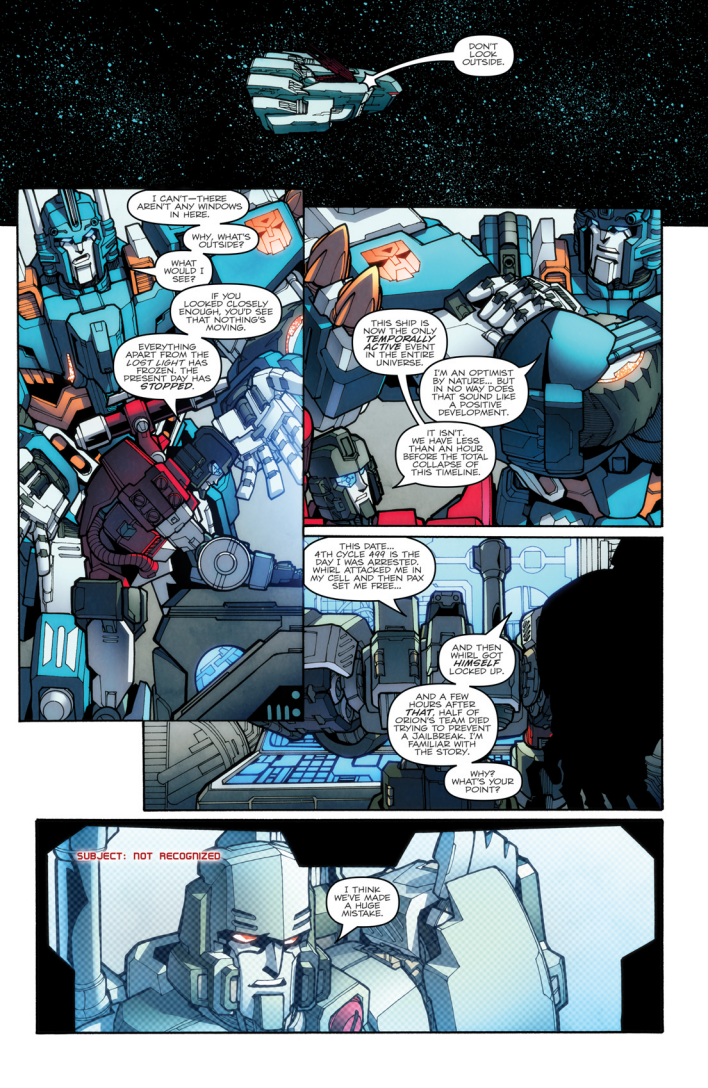
MACCADAM'S OIL HOUSE.
WHEN DID THEY GET HERE?
THEY WERE HERE WHEN WE ARRIVED. MEGATRON WAS READING OUT SOME OF HIS POETRY.
IT WAS QUITE EXCELLENT.
THE 'BOT WITH THE DRILL FOR A HAND IS IMPACTOR, FUTURE LEADER OF THE WRECKERS.
NO, I KNOW THAT. HE'S KINDA FAMOUS. NOT YOU FAMOUS, PROPER FAMOUS.
GETAWAY THINKS I COULD BE A WRECKER.
OF COURSE HE DOES.
THAT'S WHAT HE SAID! WE WERE IN THE ROSFOD ON THE WAY BACK TO THE LOST LIGHT, AND THAT'S WHAT HE SAID.
WHERE'S MY STRAW, RIPTIDE?
I ASKED FOR A CURLY STRAW.
"CHILL! RUNG'S GETTING YOU ONE. JEEZ. IT'S NOT THE END OF THE WORLD..."
SORRY, DO YOU MIND IF I...?
KONK
DRINK UP, FOLKS. WE'RE LEAVING.
REWIND JUST CALLED TO SAY IT'S ALL GONNA KICK OFF.
SOME KIND OF BARROOM BRAWL THAT ENDS UP WITH MEGATRON GETTING ARRESTED.
A BRAWL? ALL SEEMS PRETTY QUIET TO ME.

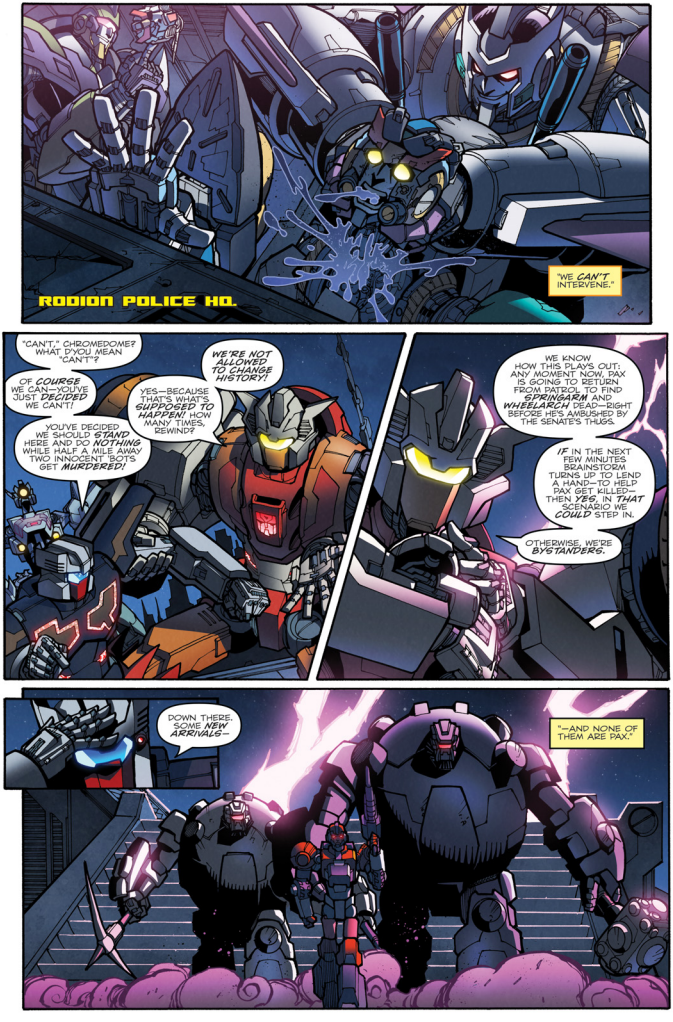
SO, WHAT AM I LOOKING AT AGAIN? NOT *MORE* POETRY...
NO. IT'S MORE OF A—OF A TREATISE ON THE STATE OF CYBERTRONIAN SOCIETY. I STARTED WRITING IT AFTER THOSE PROTESTORS WERE SHOT.
THERE'S A CHAPTER HERE CALLED *"AFTER THE ARK: NOMINUS PRIME AND THE ILLUSION OF PROGRESS."* YOU FEEL PRETTY STRONGLY ABOUT THIS STUFF, HUH?
THIS PLANET IS *DISGRACED*, IMPACTOR. AND *THAT'S* THE CURE.
"NON-VIOLENT DIRECT ACTION"? WHY DON'T WE JUST ROUND UP A FEW HUNDRED OF OUR FELLOW MINERS, BREAK OUT THE PATHBLASTERS AND TAKE THE SENATE BY FORCE?
BECAUSE THE REVOLUTION WILL BE ABOUT *IDEAS*. TAKING A NEW STEP, UTTERING A NEW WORD... *THAT'S* WHAT THE RULING ELITE FEARS THE MOST. VIOLENCE SOLVES NOTHING.
YEAH, WELL, I'LL REMEMBER THAT THE NEXT TIME I'M BEING PISTOL-WHIPPED BY MY SUPERVISOR.
NOW I'M *SORRY*, BUT I'M NOT GOING TO—
—CLEAN IT UP.
YOU *SPILLED* IT, *RUNT*.
MY NAME'S NOT RUNT. IT'S *RUNG*. I'LL BUY YOU ANOTHER BUT I'M NOT SORTING OUT THE MESS. I'M NOT A SERVICE DROID.
WHO ARE YOU, THE ONE OF THE *KNIGHTS OF CYBERTRON*? THE LAST OF THE PROGENITORS? ALPHA TRION'S LONG-LOST SPARK BROTHER?
YOU SEEM TO HAVE FORGOTTEN YOUR PLACE IN THE NATURAL ORDER OF THINGS.
SO WHY DON'T YOU GET DOWN ON YOUR KNEES—WHILE YOU STILL *HAVE* KNEES—AND STAY THERE UNTIL MY FRIEND AND I HAVE FINISHED THE *TEN* DRINKS YOU'RE GONNA BUY US.
WHAT DO YOU SAY? DO WE HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING?

LOOK, MEGATRON. I HATE THE "RULING ELITE" AS MUCH AS YOU DO, BUT INEQUALITY IS A WAY OF LIFE. PUT TWO PEOPLE IN A ROOM AND ONE WILL ALWAYS TRY TO ASSERT HIMSELF OVER THE OTHER.
NOW APPLY THAT TO THE WHOLE OF SOCIETY...
SO WHAT'S THE ANSWER? ACCEPT OUR LOT? SPEND ALL OUR SURFACE TIME GETTING TANKED UP ON LOW-GRADE ENER—
KRENCH
HEY, IF I DIDN'T GET DRUNK, I'D PROBABLY LET JUICED-UP CADETS LIKE THAT THROW ROBOTS ACROSS ROOMS.
BUT SEEING AS I'M FIVE QUARTS OF ENERGON TO THE WIND, I THINK I'M GONNA GIVE THEM A QUICK LESSON IN MANNERS.
WAIT! WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO SAY TO THEM?
I'M NOT GONNA SAY ANYTHING. I'M GOING TO DO WHAT I ALWAYS DO IN THESE SITUATIONS...
...AND THINK WITH MY FIST.

YEAH?
YEAH?
YOU WANT SOME TOO, YOU FRIKKIN' DIRT-DIGGER?
SKRSH
RIPTIDE! WE DO NOT THROW THE TIME CASE, OKAY?!
WHEN DID WE START CALLING IT A TIME CASE?
THE BACK DOORS. THIS WAY. NO ONE MAKE EYE CONTACT WITH ANYBODY.
ESPECIALLY NOT YOU, TAILGATE.
WHY ESPECIALLY NOT ME?
BECAUSE YOU'VE GOT ONE OF THOSE FACES.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH MY FACE?
IT'S BASICALLY A PUNCH MAGNET.
SO RUDE! CYCLONUS, DID YOU HEAR THAT?
NO.
WAS IT ABOUT YOUR FACE?

TIME TO GO! WE CAN'T RISK HURTING SOMEONE WHO'S NOT SUPPOSED TO GET HURT!
SOMEBODY HELP ME GET RUNG!
MANUAL SCUM.
GLOOM
OOF!
THWAK
ALWAYS THE HEAD...
LOOK AT HIM, CYCLONUS! COWERING UNDER THE TABLE! LOOK AT HIM!
WHERE'S REWIND WHEN YOU NEED A CAMERA?
UNBELIEVABLE.


DON'T LOOK OUTSIDE.
I CAN'T—THERE AREN'T ANY WINDOWS IN HERE.
WHY, WHAT'S OUTSIDE?
WHAT WOULD I SEE?
IF YOU LOOKED CLOSELY ENOUGH, YOU'D SEE THAT NOTHING'S MOVING.
EVERYTHING APART FROM THE *LOST LIGHT* HAS FROZEN. THE PRESENT DAY HAS *STOPPED*.
THIS SHIP IS NOW THE ONLY *TEMPORALLY ACTIVE* EVENT IN THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE.
I'M AN OPTIMIST BY NATURE... BUT IN NO WAY DOES THAT SOUND LIKE A POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT.
IT ISN'T. WE HAVE LESS THAN AN HOUR BEFORE THE TOTAL COLLAPSE OF THIS TIMELINE.
THIS DATE... 4TH CYCLE *449* IS THE DAY I WAS ARRESTED. WHIRL ATTACKED ME IN MY CELL AND THEN PAX SET ME FREE...
AND THEN WHIRL GOT *HIMSELF* LOCKED UP.
AND A FEW HOURS AFTER *THAT*, HALF OF ORION'S TEAM DIED TRYING TO PREVENT A JAILBREAK. I'M FAMILIAR WITH THE STORY.
WHY? WHAT'S YOUR POINT?
SUBJECT: NOT RECOGNIZED
I THINK WE'VE MADE A HUGE MISTAKE.


RODION POLICE HQ.
"WE CAN'T INTERVENE."
"CAN'T," CHROMEDOME? WHAT D'YOU MEAN "CAN'T"?
OF COURSE WE CAN—YOU'VE JUST DECIDED WE CAN'T!
YOU'VE DECIDED WE SHOULD STAND HERE AND DO NOTHING WHILE HALF A MILE AWAY TWO INNOCENT BOTS GET MURDERED!
YES—BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT'S SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN! HOW MANY TIMES, REWIND?
WE'RE NOT ALLOWED TO CHANGE HISTORY!
WE KNOW HOW THIS PLAYS OUT: ANY MOMENT NOW, PAX IS GOING TO RETURN FROM PATROL TO FIND SPRINGARM AND WHEELARCH DEAD—RIGHT BEFORE HE'S AMBUSHED BY THE SENATE'S THUGS.
IF IN THE NEXT FEW MINUTES BRAINSTORM TURNS UP TO LEND A HAND—TO HELP PAX GET KILLED—THEN YES IN THAT SCENARIO WE COULD STEP IN.
OTHERWISE, WE'RE BYSTANDERS.
DOWN THERE. SOME NEW ARRIVALS—
"—AND NONE OF THEM ARE PAX."

YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BELIEVE THIS, BUT I *KNOW* THOSE GUYS. WELL, THE TWO HEAVIES: ***HAMMER*** AND ***ANVIL***.

THEY'RE THE ONES WHO ATTACKED ME—RIGHT HERE, IN FACT—ABOUT A YEAR FROM NOW. ME AND ROLLER. THEY WERE AFTER SHOCKWAVE.

WHY ARE THEY HERE NOW?

LATE FOR THE JAILBREAK, I GUESS.

DO YOU REMEMBER THESE THREE TURNING UP FIRST TIME ROUND, WHIRL?

WHIRL...?

AAAARRRGGGGH

STOP!

WHAT WAS I JUST SAYING ABOUT ***NOT INTERVENING!*** ABOUT NOT ***CHANGING HISTORY!***

YEAH, WELL, MAYBE HISTORY ***DESERVES*** TO BE CHANGED. MAYBE HISTORY HAD IT COMING.

WHIRL—

SERIOUSLY, WHAT DID HISTORY ***EVER*** DO FOR ME?

YES—AND CAN WE ***NOT*** HAVE THIS CONVERSATION IN FRONT OF THEM?

I DON'T WANT THEM BEING ***TIPPED OFF*** ABOUT FUTURE EVENTS—

—AND SEEING AS YOU'VE JUST ***RIPPED THEIR HANDS OFF***, I CAN'T MAKE THEM ***FORGET*** WHAT THEY'RE HEARING.

I REALLY DON'T UNDERSTAND YOU, WHIRL. YOU'RE PREPARED TO LET WHEELARCH AND SPRINGARM DIE, BUT THESE THREE SHOW UP AND YOU NEARLY RIP 'EM TO SHREDS...!

YOUR LITTLE ***JUNKY*** SAYS HE MIGHT GET KILLED IF I GET TOO ROUGH WITH THESE PINHEADS, BUT THEY KILLED ME ***FIRST***. THEY STOPPED ME ***WORKING***.

STOPPED YOU WORKING? HOW? YOU WERE IN THE ***AERIAL CORPS***...

AAARGH!

AAARGH!

IF YOU KILL THEM, THEY CAN'T COME BACK HERE IN A YEAR'S TIME TO GET SHOCKWAVE!

AND IF *THEY'RE* NOT AROUND, WHO KNOWS HOW MANY PSYCHOS THE SENATE WILL SEND IN THEIR PLACE? TEN? TWENTY?

AND WHO KNOWS HOW ROLLER AND I WILL FARE AGAINST THEIR REPLACEMENTS?

KILL THEM AND YOU COULD END UP KILLING *ME!*

HM.

AND THAT'S YOUR MOST PERSUASIVE ARGUMENT...?

"I WAS *BORN* INTO THE AERIAL CORPS—BUT I *CHOSE* TO BE A WATCHMAKER. AND THEN THOSE TWO WRECKED MY TOOLS, MY STUDIO...*

*AS SEEN IN ISSUE #6.

"ALL BECAUSE I WOULDN'T PAY FOR THEIR 'PROTECTION.'"

IT WAS NEVER ABOUT PROTECTION MONEY... THE *FUNCTIONIST COUNCIL* WANTED US TO PUT YOU IN YOUR PLACE...

THEY FOUND OUT THAT ONE OF THEIR FUNCTIONARIES—A *MODERATE*—HAD GIVEN YOU PERMISSION TO CHANGE JOBS.

WE WERE TOLD TO *KILL YOUR CAREER*: FIRST YOUR TOOLS, THEN YOUR HANDS...

MY *HANDS*? BUT—BUT THAT WAS *LATER*. THE *SENATE* DID THAT TO GET ME ON SIDE...

BACK THEN THE FUNCTIONISTS *CONTROLLED* THE SENATE. AND WHO D'YOU THINK *INVENTED* EMPURATA?

THE *FUNCTIONISTS* DID THIS TO ME?

DID ALL THREE OF THESE GUYS ATTACK YOU?

ER—JUST THE TWO BIG GUYS. WHY?

BECAUSE I'M *AGITATED* AND I NEED TO HURT SOMEONE.

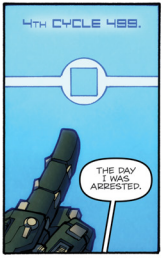
COURSE IT *WOULD* BE THE ONE GUY WHO *DIDN'T* TRASH MY PLACE...

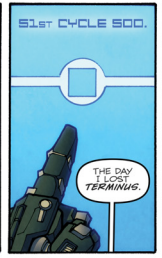
PLEASE—I DIDN'T *DO* ANYTHING! I—

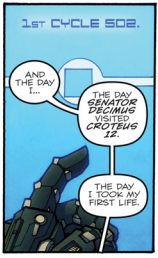
SORRY, BUDDY. GUILTY BY ASSOCIATION.

CHOOM

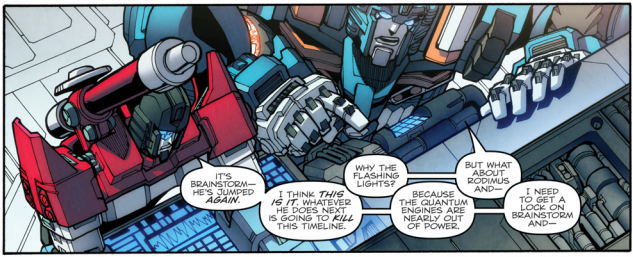
WHAT DO YOU MEAN WE'VE MADE A MISTAKE?
I WAS CONVINCED THAT BRAINSTORM INTENDED TO KILL PAX—BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT I WOULD DO.
OR RATHER WHAT I WOULD HAVE DONE...
BUT LOOK AT THESE DATES...


4TH CYCLE 499.
THE DAY I WAS ARRESTED.

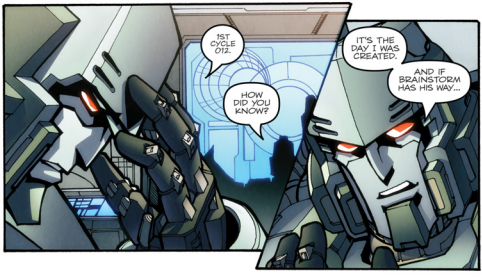

51ST CYCLE 500.
THE DAY I LOST TERMINUS.

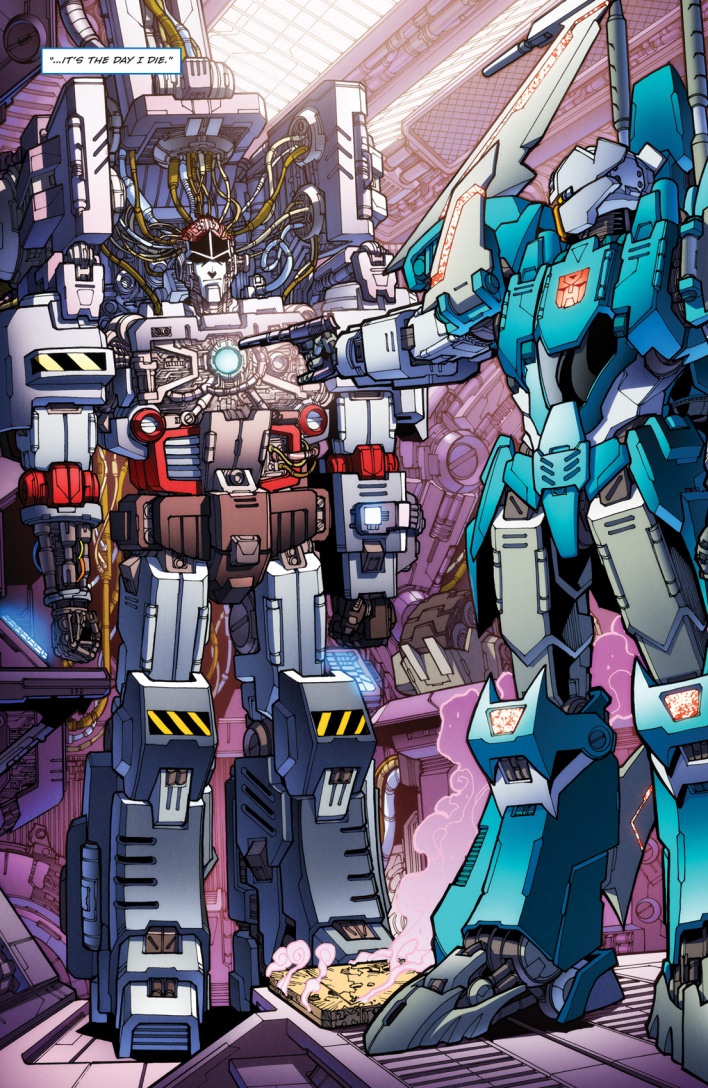

1ST CYCLE 502.
AND THE DAY I...
THE DAY SENATOR DECIMUS VISITED CROTEUS II.
THE DAY I TOOK MY FIRST LIFE.

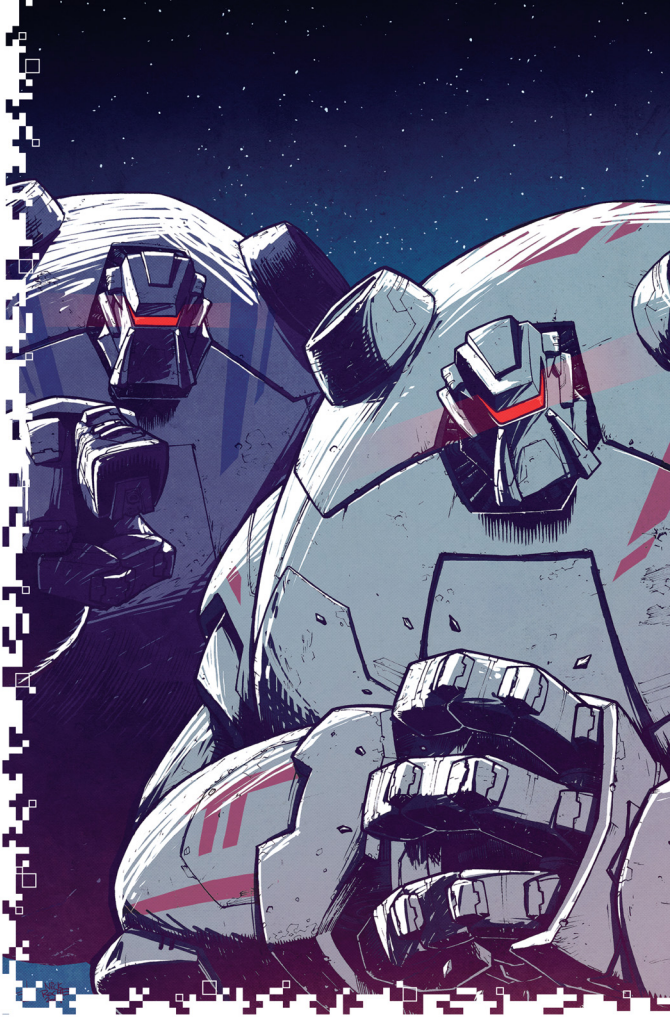
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, DO YOU?
BRAINSTORM'S JOURNEY IS MY JOURNEY.
THESE DATES—THEY'RE MY DATES. MY HOTSPOTS.


IT'S BRAINSTORM—HE'S JUMPED AGAIN.
I THINK THIS IS IT. WHATEVER HE DOES NEXT IS GOING TO KILL THIS TIMELINE.
WHY THE FLASHING LIGHTS?
BECAUSE THE QUANTUM ENGINES ARE NEARLY OUT OF POWER.
BUT WHAT ABOUT RODIMUS AND—
I NEED TO GET A LOCK ON BRAINSTORM AND—

GOT HIM!
EXACT TIME AND LOCATION!


1ST CYCLE 012.
HOW DID YOU KNOW?
IT'S THE DAY I WAS CREATED.
AND IF BRAINSTORM HAS HIS WAY...


"...IT'S THE DAY I DIE."



MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #37 COVER B

by **NICK ROCHE** Colors by **JOSH BURCHAM**

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #38 COVER A

by **ALEX MILNE** Colors by **JOSH PEREZ**

THE LOST LIGHT.
(WHAT'S LEFT OF) THE PRESENT DAY.

SEND—
—ME—
—BACK!
HNK!

I TOLD YOU, I—
KAH!
BRAINSTORM'S ABOUT TO KILL ME!
I HAVE A RIGHT TO DEFEND MYSELF!
MEGATRON! CALM DOWN OR—

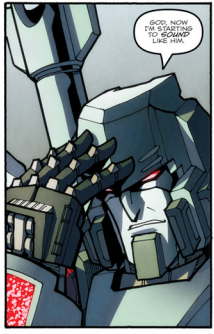
I SAID CALM DOWN.
OFF ME!
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND! FIVE MILLION YEARS AGO—1ST CYCLE 012—I'M NEW!
I'M HALF-BUILT, UNDERPOWERED, AND OFFLINE!
I'M VULNERABLE!

RODIMUS AND THE OTHERS WILL STOP BRAINSTORM. I WAS ABOUT TO SEND THEM AFTER HIM WHEN YOU ATTACKED ME.
"ATTACKED" YOU. I DIDN'T "ATTACK" YOU. THAT WAS—
I WAS REMONSTRATING.

BESIDES—RODIMUS?
YOU WANT ME TO PUT MY LIFE IN THE HANDS OF AN AUTOBOT WHO SOMERSAULTS ONTO THE BRIDGE?
AN AUTOBOT WHO PRETENDS TO BE DEAD IF YOU ASK HIM A DIFFICULT QUESTION?

AN AUTOBOT WHO, IN RESPONSE TO A CRISIS IN MORALE PRECIPITATED BY HIS OWN WOEFUL CAPTAINCY, INTRODUCED A REWARD SYSTEM BASED HIS OWN FACE?

YOU WERE HAPPY TO LEAVE THIS TO RODIMUS WHEN YOU THOUGHT IT WAS PRIME'S LIFE ON THE LINE...
WHAT?
DON'T BE CLEVER. IT MAKES YOU LOOK STUPID.


GO0, NOW I'M STARTING TO SOUND LIKE HIM.

EVEN IF WE THOUGHT LETTING YOU LOOSE IN THE TIMESTREAM WAS A GOOD IDEA, I CAN'T. IT'S TOO LATE.
THERE WAS ENOUGH ENERGY IN THE QUANTUM ENGINES FOR ONE MORE JUMP— AND I JUST USED IT TO MOVE THE OTHERS.
BUT—

NO, MEGATRON.
NO.
YOU'RE GOING TO BACK OFF, CALM DOWN, AND SHUT UP—IN THAT ORDER.

...
RIGHT. YES.

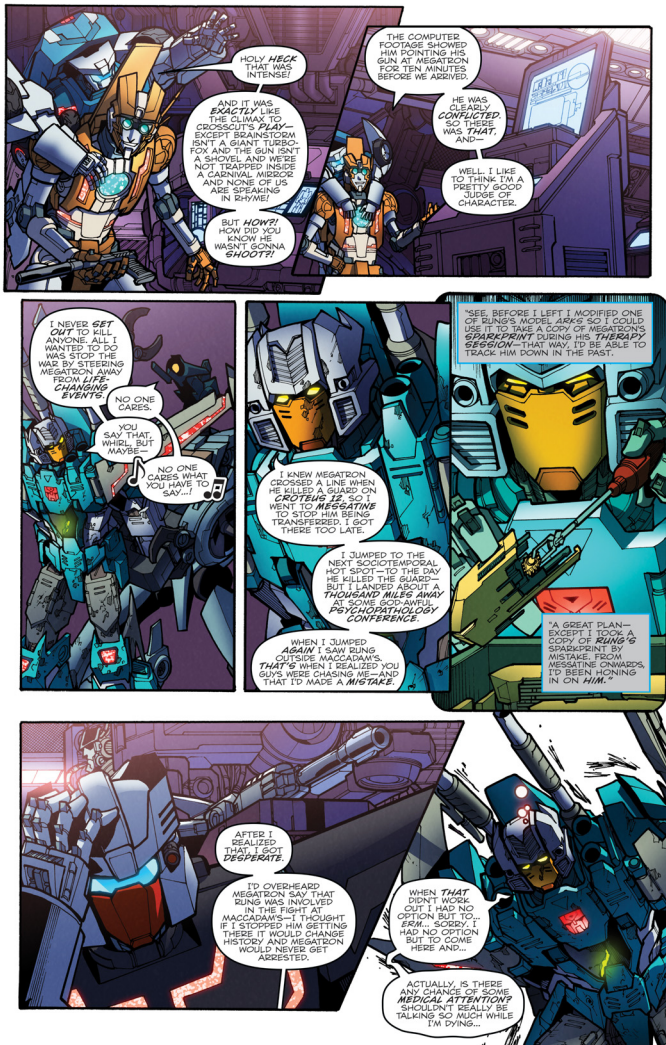
NEATEST HANDWRITING. YOU?
SIGH!
FOR ABANDONING MY EVIL WAYS.

MEANWHILE, FIVE MILLION YEARS AGO...
CAN YOU HEAR ME?
PROBABLY NOT. THEY HAVEN'T *FINISHED* YOU YET, HAVE THEY?
YOU'RE NOT QUITE *DONE*.
FZZT
EH?
BOOM
THE OLD *TIME-TRAVELING* GRENADE TRICK!
IS IT OLD?
IT IS NOW.
HE'S ALIVE. HIS LEGS TOOK THE BRUNT, BUT HE'S OKAY.

CON FACILITY 113
HA! MEGATRON WAS BORN IN A 'CON FACILITY!'
MADE, NOT BORN. IT'S SHORT FOR "CONSTRUCTED COLD."
THIS IS A POSTNATAL FACILITY—A THAWING CHAMBER WHERE FRESHLY IMPLANTED SPARKS WERE LEFT TO DEFROST.
BRAINSTORM HACKED INTO THE RECORD SYSTEM AND WIPED MEGATRON'S BATCH CODE—AND IT LOOKS LIKE HE TRIED TO REMOVE HIS SERIAL NUMBER, TOO.
MURDERING MEGATRON WASN'T ENOUGH: HE WANTED TO REMOVE ALL TRACE OF HIS CREATION.
WHAT'S MEGATRON'S BATCH NUMBER, REWIND?
I CAN PUT IT BACK IN.
CAN YOU JUST BEAR WITH ME WHILE I—
SORRY.
SOME KIND OF—URGH—INFORMATION RUSH.
THE NEW HISTORY—THE REVISED HISTORY... IT'S ALL FALLING INTO PLACE.
THE REST OF MY DATABASE HAS BEEN OVERWRITTEN.
BUT WHY?
NOW WE'VE STOPPED BRAINSTORM, THE SURROGATE TIMELINE SHOULD BE RECEDING...
...UNLESS WE DIDN'T STOP BRAINSTORM...
BRAINSTORM, WAIT! PLEASE, JUST—JUST HOLD ON.
WELL?
I'M HOLDING ON.
YEP, YEP, NO, THAT'S GOOD, THAT'S—THAT'S REALLY—
SORRY. I NEED A MINUTE TO WORK OUT WHAT I'M GOING TO SAY.
YEAH—AND WE KNOW YOU TRIED TO KILL EVERYONE ON BOARD!
I POISONED THEIR DRINKS, YOU PINHEAD. LOOK UP INCAPACITATE. LOOK UP MURDER. THEN COME BACK AND APOLOGIZE.
OKAY, OKAY, HOW ABOUT THIS:

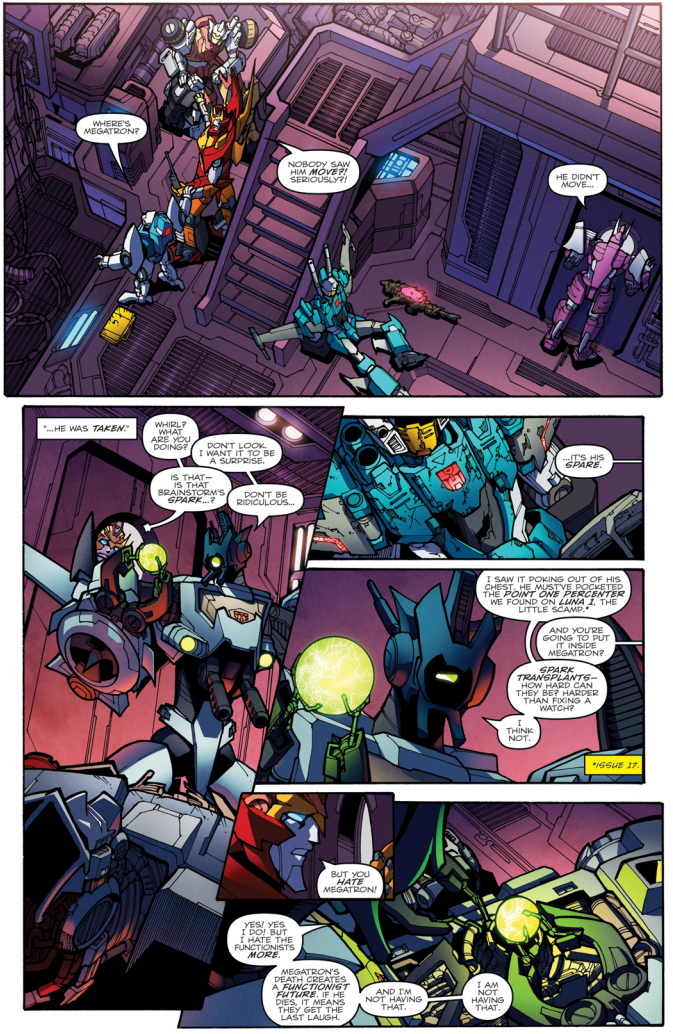
FIVE MILLION YEARS AGO IS... SLAP-BANG IN THE MIDDLE OF THE *SILVER HARVEST*.
THOUSANDS OF *KNOCK-OFFS* WERE BEING RELEASED INTO THE WILD EVERY DAY.
PERCY? SHED ANY LIGHT?
IT APPEARS OUR TIMELINE IS *IRREVERSIBLY* COMPROMISED.
THAT SAID, I *MIGHT* BE ABLE TO GET THINGS BACK ON TRACK IF *DISMANTLE* THE *PARADOX LOCKS*— BUT IT'S PHENOMENALLY RISKY AND YOU NEED TO THINK CAREFULLY BEFORE—
SURE. GO AHEAD, WHATEVER.
BUT I DON'T *GET* IT! WE STOPPED BRAINSTORM—THAT WAS SUPPOSED TO *FIX* THINGS! UNLESS...
SORRY ABOUT THIS! DIDN'T THINK YOU WERE ACTUALLY GOING TO *STOP*.
WHAT ARE YOU *PLAYING* AT?
FIRST YOU TRY AND KILL *ORION PAX*. NOW MEGATRON!
ORION PAX? WHY WOULD I TRY TO KILL HIM?
OH. I DON'T KNOW— *BECAUSE YOU'RE A DECEPTICON?*
AH. SO YOU... KNOW ABOUT THAT.
THERE'S MORE THAN MEGATRON'S LIFE AT STAKE HERE. IF YOU PULL THAT TRIGGER, *EVERYTHING* CHANGES.
ALL OF US. WE ALL GO. OUR WHOLE *TIMELINE* GONE.
SO...
YES. EXACTLY.
SO THAT'S THE WHOLE POINT! THAT'S THE WHOLE *PLAN!*

I THINK YOU SHOULD PULL THE TRIGGER.
YOU'VE COME ALL THIS WAY—YOU'VE TRAVELED MILLIONS OF YEARS AND SPENT... HOW LONG?
HOW LONG DID IT TAKE TO BUILD THE TIME MACHINE?
CENTURIES.
CENTURIES. YOU'VE RISKED EVERYTHING—YOUR LIFE, FRIENDS, YOUR REPUTATION...
AND HERE WE ARE. IT'S ALL BEEN LEADING TO *THIS* MOMENT...
TO THIS ROOM AND *YOUR* FINGER ON *THAT* TRIGGER. SO GO ON...
SQUEEZE.
YES!
FINALLY! SOMEONE WHO *GETS IT!*
FOR GOD'S SAKE, RUNG! I'D EXPECT THIS FROM *WHIRL*...
DAMN RIGHT.
—BUT *YOU?*
IS THIS MACCADAM'S? ARE YOU *CONGUERED* OR SOMETHING?
AND YET I CAN'T HELP BUT NOTICE THAT HE HASN'T PULLED THE TRIGGER.
OF COURSE HE HASN'T, BECAUSE HE'S *BETTER THAN THAT*. BETTER THAN ANY OF US GAVE HIM CREDIT FOR.
BRAINSTORM...?
THE THING IS, I'VE... NEVER ACTUALLY *KILLED* ANYONE. NOT FACE-TO-FACE. NOT DIRECTLY.
INDIRECTLY, GOD, *HUGELY* DIFFERENT STORY... BUT ACTUALLY *DOING THE DEED?*
TAKING THE SHOT? SNUFFING THE SPARK? NO.
MY HANDS ARE STILL CLEAN.
NOT BY CHANCE. BY *CHOICE*.
GOOD, BECAUSE GUESS WHAT? YOU STILL GET TO CHOOSE.
DON'T SHOOT MEGATRON.
DON'T SHOOT *ANYONE*.
LET'S CALL IT A DAY.
LET'S CALL IT A DAY AND GO HOME.


HOLY HECK THAT WAS INTENSE!
AND IT WAS EXACTLY LIKE THE CLIMAX TO CROSSCUT'S PLAY—EXCEPT BRAINSTORM ISN'T A GIANT TURBO-FOX AND THE GUN ISN'T A SHOVEL AND WE'RE NOT TRAPPED INSIDE A CARNIVAL MIRROR AND NONE OF US ARE SPEAKING IN RHYME!
BUT HOW?! HOW DID YOU KNOW HE WASN'T GONNA SHOOT?!
THE COMPUTER FOOTAGE SHOWED HIM POINTING HIS GUN AT MEGATRON FOR TEN MINUTES BEFORE WE ARRIVED.
HE WAS CLEARLY CONFLICTED. SO THERE WAS THAT, AND—
WELL, I LIKE TO THINK I'M A PRETTY GOOD JUDGE OF CHARACTER.
I NEVER GET OUT TO KILL ANYONE. ALL I WANTED TO DO WAS STOP THE WAR BY STEERING MEGATRON AWAY FROM LIFE-CHANGING EVENTS.
NO ONE CARES.
YOU SAY THAT, WHIRL, BUT MAYBE—
NO ONE CARES WHAT YOU HAVE TO SAY...!
I KNEW MEGATRON CROSSED A LINE WHEN HE KILLED A GUARD ON CROTEUG 12. SO I WENT TO MEGATINE TO STOP HIM BEING TRANSFERRED. I GOT THERE TOO LATE.
I JUMPED TO THE NEXT SOCIOTEMPORAL HOT SPOT—TO THE DAY HE KILLED THE GUARD—BUT I LANDED ABOUT A THOUSAND MILES AWAY AT SOME GOD-AWFUL PSYCHOPATHOLOGY CONFERENCE.
WHEN I JUMPED AGAIN I SAW RUNG OUTSIDE MACCADAM'S. THAT'S WHEN I REALIZED YOU GUYS WERE CHASING ME—AND THAT I'D MADE A MISTAKE.
"SEE, BEFORE I LEFT I MODIFIED ONE OF RUNG'S MODEL ARKS SO I COULD USE IT TO TAKE A COPY OF MEGATRON'S SPARKPRINT DURING HIS THERAPY SESSION—THAT WAY, I'D BE ABLE TO TRACK HIM DOWN IN THE PAST.
"A GREAT PLAN—EXCEPT I TOOK A COPY OF RUNG'S SPARKPRINT BY MISTAKE. FROM MEGATINE ONWARDS, I'D BEEN HONING IN ON HIM."
AFTER I REALIZED THAT, I GOT DESPERATE.
I'D OVERHEARD MEGATRON SAY THAT RUNG WAS INVOLVED IN THE FIGHT AT MACCADAM'S—I THOUGHT IF I STOPPED HIM GETTING THERE IT WOULD CHANGE HISTORY AND MEGATRON WOULD NEVER GET ARRESTED.
WHEN THAT DIDN'T WORK OUT I HAD NO OPTION BUT TO... ERM... SORRY, I HAD NO OPTION BUT TO COME HERE AND...
ACTUALLY, IS THERE ANY CHANCE OF SOME MEDICAL ATTENTION? SHOULDN'T REALLY BE TALKING SO MUCH WHILE I'M DYING...

CHA BOOM
THERE. JOB DONE.
C'MERE, YOU. GIMME THAT.
HKK!
I'M ALWAYS SO *PASSIVE*. WATCHING, LISTENING, DOCUMENTING... EVEN WHEN THE D.J.D. KILLED EVERYONE, I JUST *STOOD THERE!*
YOU WERE POWERLESS!
Elegant CHAOS
PART 3: PREDESTINATION: AN EXPERT'S GUIDE

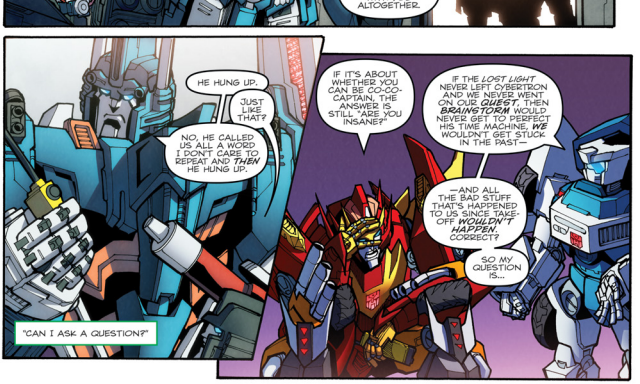
RODIMUS? WHAT'S HAPPENING? WHAT'S GOING ON?
IT'S MEGATRON, HE'S—
DEAD.
EXTREMELY.
WHAT?
ALL THIS TIME WE'VE BEEN DESPERATE TO PROTECT OUR TIMELINE—TO PROTECT OURSELVES—EVEN IF IT MEANT SAVING A MASS MURDERER.
WE NEVER STOPPED TO THINK—ONCE—NOT ONCE—NOT ONCE DID WE ASK OURSELVES ONE SIMPLE QUESTION: WHAT IF A FUTURE WITHOUT MEGATRON IS BETTER?
NOT FOR US, BUT FOR EVERYONE ELSE...
I'VE SEEN WHAT HAPPENS AFTER HE DIES. IT'S ALL IN MY HEAD, NOW. ALL OF IT...
WITHOUT MEGATRON TO LEAD THE REVOLT AGAINST MODE DETERMINISM, THE SENATE REMAINS IN POWER—UNTIL IT'S DISPLACED BY A RESURGENT FUNCTIONIST COUNCIL.
RATIOISM AND OCCUPATIONAL FUNDAMENTALISM DOMINATE.
CYBERTRON BECOMES A PURELY FUNCTIONIST SOCIETY.
AND IT'S AWFUL! FOR US—FOR THE PEOPLE—IT'S AWFUL!
BUT FOR EVERYONE ELSE—FOR EVERYONE OUTSIDE CYBERTRON—IT'S FANTASTIC.
WITHOUT MEGATRON, THERE'S NO INFILTRATION PROTOCOL, NO NEO-TECHNOISM, NO RUSH TO CYBERFORM THE GALAXY. OTHER WORLDS ARE LEFT ALONE. COUNTLESS BILLIONS OF LIVES ARE SAVED.
MEGATRON DIES AND WE LOSE; BUT THE UNIVERSE WINS.
I...
YEAH.
CAN'T ARGUE WITH THAT.
YOU HATE ME. DON'T YOU? YOU'RE APPALLED. YOU SHOULD BE.
I'M—SURPRISED.
AND YOU'RE SHAKING.
YES, AND TODAY I WASN'T. TODAY, I HAD A CHANCE TO MAKE THINGS BETTER—AND I TOOK IT.
NOT SURE I DESERVE THIS...
YEAH, YOU DON'T GET A SAY.
I JUST WANT SOMEONE, DOMEY.
I KNOW THAT SOUND—I CAN HEAR YOU SMILING. WHY ARE YOU SMILING?
YOU JUST CALLED ME DOMEY.
I ALWAYS CALL YOU DOMEY.
YOU AND ME? DSF NO. THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME.
UM, RODIMUS...?

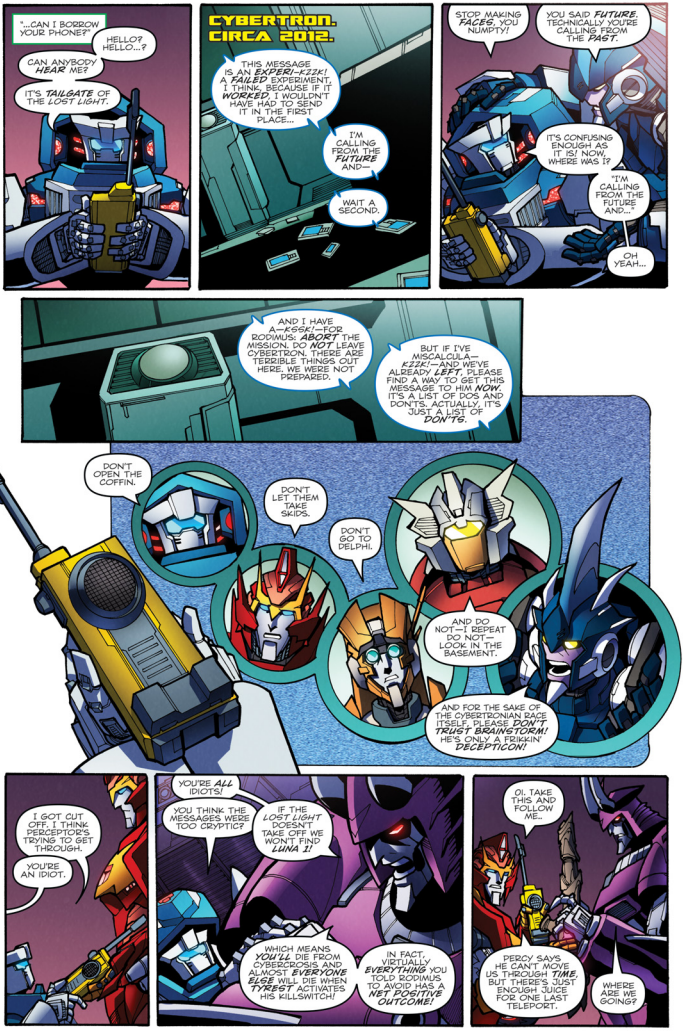

WHERE'S MEGATRON?
NOBODY SAW HIM MOVE?! SERIOUSLY?!
HE DIDN'T MOVE...
"...HE WAS TAKEN."
WHIRL? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
DON'T LOOK. I WANT IT TO BE A SURPRISE.
IS THAT— IS THAT BRAINSTORM'S SPARK...?
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS...
...IT'S HIS SPARE.
I SAW IT POKING OUT OF HIS CHEST. HE MUST'VE POCKETED THE POINT ONE PERCENTER WE FOUND ON LUNA 1, THE LITTLE SCAMP.*
AND YOU'RE GOING TO PUT IT INSIDE MEGATRON?
SPARK TRANSPLANTS— HOW HARD CAN THEY BE? HARDER THAN FIXING A WATCH?
I THINK NOT.
*ISSUE 17.
BUT YOU HATE MEGATRON!
YES! YES I DO! BUT I HATE THE FUNCTIONISTS MORE.
MEGATRON'S DEATH CREATES A FUNCTIONIST FUTURE. IF HE DIES, IT MEANS THEY GET THE LAST LAUGH.
AND I'M NOT HAVING THAT.
I AM NOT HAVING THAT.

VOILA!

A FORGED SPARK INSIDE A CONSTRUCTED COLD BODY.
THE FIRST *HYBRID*.
AND I'M NOT COMING OUT UNLESS EVERYONE PROMISES NOT TO KILL HIM—LEAST NOT UNTIL WE GET BACK TO THE *LOST LIGHT*.
BZZT BZZT

WHAT?
GOOD NEWS FIRST: PERCEPTOR'S DETECTING MOVEMENT OUTSIDE THE SHIP.
THE TIMELINE'S ACTIVE AGAIN.
CONGRATULATIONS—YOU JUST SAVED THE UNIVERSE.
I'M GIVING A HALF-HEARTED THUMBS-UP.
WAIT BACK UP. WHAT DO YOU MEAN "GOOD NEWS *FIRST*"?
YOU'RE ***STRANDED IN THE PAST***. YOUR LAST TIME-JUMP DRAINED THE QUANTUM ENGINES SO WE CAN'T MOVE YOU THROUGH TIME—
—AND WE CAN'T ***RECHARGE*** THEM WITHOUT LOSING CONTACT WITH YOU ALTOGETHER.


HE HUNG UP.
JUST LIKE THAT?
NO, HE CALLED US ALL A WORD I DON'T CARE TO REPEAT AND ***THEN*** HE HUNG UP.
"CAN I ASK A QUESTION?"
IF IT'S ABOUT WHETHER YOU CAN BE CO-CO-CAPTAIN, THE ANSWER IS STILL "ARE YOU INSANE?"
IF THE *LOST LIGHT* NEVER LEFT CYBERTRON AND WE NEVER WENT ON OUR ***QUEST***, THEN ***BRAINSTORM*** WOULD NEVER GET TO PERFECT HIS TIME MACHINE. ***WE*** WOULDN'T GET STUCK IN THE PAST—
—AND ALL THE BAD STUFF THAT'S HAPPENED TO US SINCE TAKE-OFF ***WOULDN'T HAPPEN***, CORRECT?
SO MY QUESTION IS...


"...CAN I BORROW YOUR PHONE?"
HELLO? HELLO...?
CAN ANYBODY HEAR ME?
IT'S TAILGATE OF THE LOST LIGHT.
CYBERTRON. CIRCA 2012.
THIS MESSAGE IS AN EXPERI-KZZK! A FAILED EXPERIMENT, I THINK, BECAUSE IF IT WORKED, I WOULDN'T HAVE HAD TO SEND IT IN THE FIRST PLACE...
I'M CALLING FROM THE FUTURE AND...
WAIT A SECOND.
STOP MAKING FACES, YOU NUMPTY!
YOU SAID FUTURE. TECHNICALLY YOURE CALLING FROM THE PAST.
IT'S CONFUSING ENOUGH AS IT IS! NOW, WHERE WAS I?
"I'M CALLING FROM THE FUTURE AND..."
OH YEAH...
AND I HAVE A—KSSK!—FOR RODIMUS: ABORT THE MISSION. DO NOT LEAVE CYBERTRON. THERE ARE TERRIBLE THINGS OUT HERE. WE WERE NOT PREPARED.
BUT IF I'VE MISCALCULA—KZZK!—AND WE'VE ALREADY LEFT, PLEASE FIND A WAY TO GET THIS MESSAGE TO HIM NOW. IT'S A LIST OF DOS AND DON'TS. ACTUALLY, IT'S JUST A LIST OF DON'TS.
DON'T OPEN THE COFFIN.
DON'T LET THEM TAKE SKIDS.
DON'T GO TO DELPHI.
AND DO NOT—I REPEAT DO NOT—LOOK IN THE BASEMENT.
AND FOR THE SAKE OF THE CYBERTRONIAN RACE ITSELF, PLEASE DON'T TRUST BRAINSTORM! HE'S ONLY A FRIKKIN' DECEPTICON!
I GOT CUT OFF. I THINK PERCEPTOR'S TRYING TO GET THROUGH.
YOU'RE AN IDIOT.
YOU'RE ALL IDIOTS!
YOU THINK THE MESSAGES WERE TOO CRYPTIC?
IF THE LOST LIGHT DOESN'T TAKE OFF WE WON'T FIND LUNA 1!
WHICH MEANS YOU'LL DIE FROM CYBERSOSIS AND ALMOST EVERYONE ELSE WILL DIE WHEN TYREST ACTIVATES HIS KILLSWITCH!
IN FACT, VIRTUALLY EVERYTHING YOU TOLD SCIDIMUS TO AVOID HAS A NET POSITIVE OUTCOME!
OI. TAKE THIS AND FOLLOW ME.
PERCY SAYS HE CAN'T MOVE US THROUGH TIME, BUT THERE'S JUST ENOUGH JUICE FOR ONE LAST TELEPORT.
WHERE ARE WE GOING?

THE OTHER SIDE OF CYBERTRON. FIVE MILES BELOW GROUND.

NO LIGHTS. GOOD SIGN.

WHY IS THAT A GOOD SIGN?

IT MEANS WE'RE IN THE RIGHT PLACE. WHEN'S THE LAST TIME YOU BROKE INTO A *BRIGHTLY LIT SECRET BASE?*

NO, SOMETHING'S AMISS. PERCEPTOR SAID WE'D LAND NEAR AN *EXPERIMENTAL GENERATOR*—YET NO ONE'S HERE TO STOP US.

I WAS EXPECTING A *SECURITY GUARD*, AT LEAST.

SORRY I'M LATE—

—I HAD TO FEED THE *TURBO-FOXES.*

BUT DON'T WORRY—THEY'RE STILL *VERY* HUNGRY!

FIND THE GENERATOR. I'LL HANDLE THIS.

FINE—BUT IF ANYONE ASKS, I *PROTESTED.*

AND REMEMBER THE *GOLDEN RULE*: NO KILLING!

'COURSE THIS IS ALL YOUR SPARMATE'S FAULT...

OH! HEY! YOU'RE AWAKE!

AFTER YOU DIED—

(CONGRATS ON THE *RESURRECTION*, BY THE WAY. *I* WAS SORT OF DEAD ONCE. WE SHOULD COMPARE NOTES.)

AFTER YOU DIED, HE WAS A *MESS*.

I'VE SEEN HIM SUFFER LOSSES BEFORE, BUT *YOU*... YOU TORE HIM APART.

CHROMEDOME SAID YOU HELPED HIM. I DON'T CARE IF YOU'RE A DECEPTICON— *THANK YOU*.

I *HAD* TO HELP HIM. I *SYMPATHIZED*. I'VE *BEEN THERE*.

YOU HAD A *CONJUNX ENDURA*?

YES, YES AND NO... IT WAS MORE OF A *OWE-WAY THING*.

QUARK.

A SCIENTIST FROM BODION. WE WORKED TOGETHER.

QUARK OF BODION...

ACCESSING INTERNAL DATABASE >>>

DON'T LOOK HIM UP. YOU'LL—

OH.

I SEE. I'M SORRY.

CAPTURED DURING THE *FALL OF K'TH KINSERE* AND TAKEN TO *GRINDCORE*. NEVER MADE IT OUT. DIED BEFORE HIS TIME.

WAIT... IS *THAT* WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT?

ORIGINALLY? YEAH. GO BACK IN TIME AND SAVE QUARK.

STOP HIM DYING IN A *PRISON CAMP*.

AND THEN WHEN *YOU* DIED AND CHROMEDOME STARTED... COLLAPSING. I THOUGHT— WHY SETTLE FOR SAVING *ONE* LIFE? WHY NOT SAVE YOU TOO? WHY NOT SAVE *EVERYONE*?

KINDA WISH I'D BEEN LESS *AMBITIOUS* NOW.

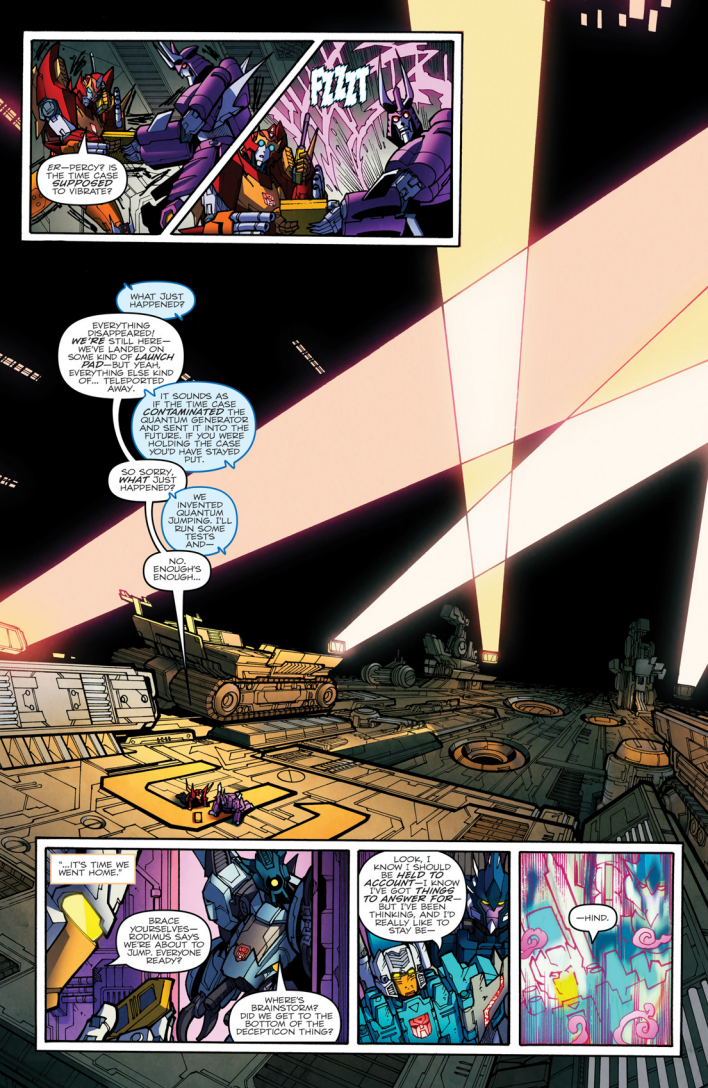
"STILL. LEAST I GOT TO SEE THAT SILLY OLD SOD ONE LAST TIME.

"BEST DETOUR I EVER MADE."

HEY, PERCY! I THINK I'VE FOUND IT!
CYCLONUS THOUGHT YOU'D TRACED THE WRONG ENERGY SIGNATURE. I SAID "PERCY MAKE A MISTAKE?
"THE LAST TIME *THAT* HAPPENED IT TURNED OUT *PHYSICS* HAD SCREWED UP."
HA!
THERE. CAN YOU SEE THAT?
IS THAT IT? IS THAT THE *GENERATOR?*
PART OF IT. YES, IT'S A LITTLE MORE *PRIMITIVE* THAN I WAS HOPING FOR, BUT THEN IT *IS* A PROTOTYPE.
WITH SOME JUDICIOUS *ADAPTATIONS* WE CAN USE IT TO *RECHARGE* THE TIME CASE AND BRING EVERYONE HOME.
SO LISTEN CAREFULLY AND DO *EXACTLY* AS I SAY...
GRRRR!
THOK
UH.

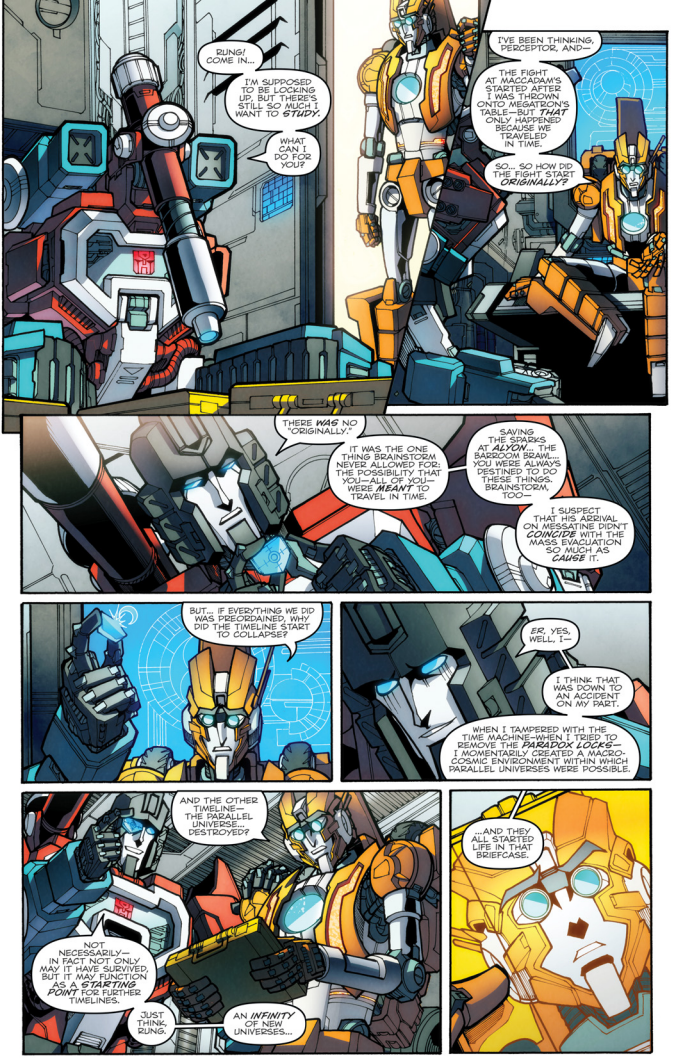
CHOOM
CHOOM
CHOOM
AK-k!
AK-k!
HRRK!
LOCKED
"NOW, REPLACE THE CASING AND YOU'RE DONE."

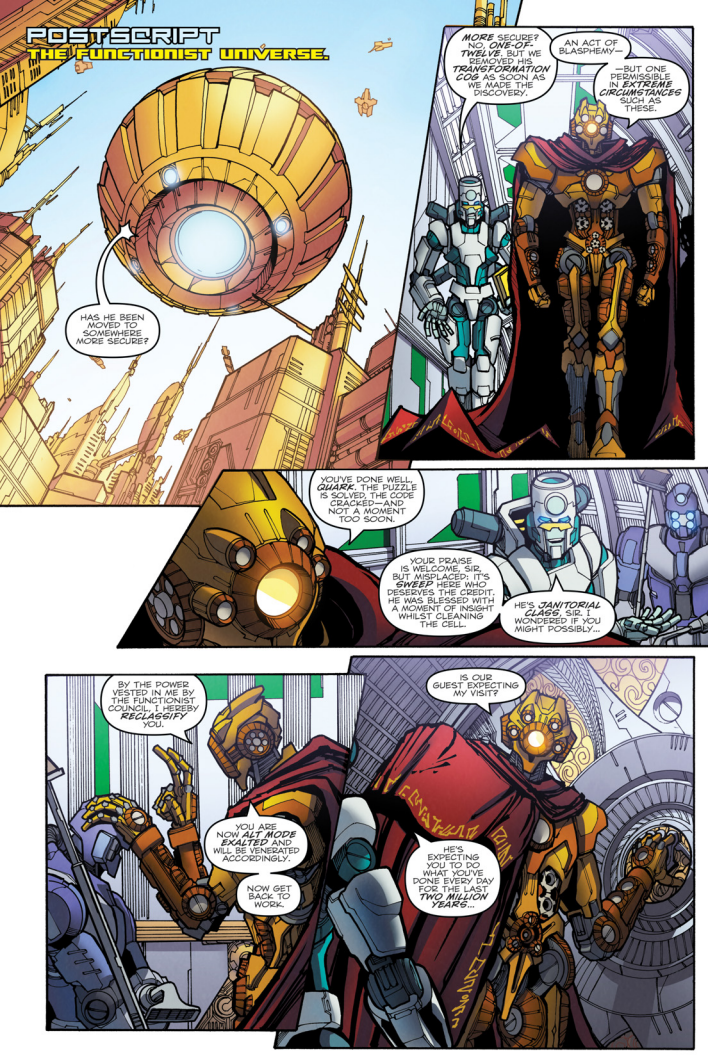
CASING REPLACED AND...
...SORTED! ONE *UPGRADED* QUANTUM GENERATOR!
NICE ONE, PERCY. IS THERE ANYTHING YOU DON'T KNOW?
I DIDN'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT QUANTUM MECHANICS UNTIL I JOINED THE *LOST LIGHT*...
NOW PLUG IN THE TIME CASE AND ACTIVATE THE GENERATOR. ONCE THE CASE IS *FULLY CHARGED* YOU'LL NEED TO *UNDO* ALL YOUR ADAPTATIONS.
WHY?
WHY? BECAUSE WE CAN'T HAVE YOU LEAVING BEHIND A QUANTUM GENERATOR THAT'S MILLIONS OF YEARS AHEAD OF ITS TIME.
"THEY'VE BEEN GONE FOR *AGES*, REWIND."
WHAT DO WE EVEN *KNOW* ABOUT—WHERE HAVE THEY GONE AGAIN? *UNITREX?*
YOU KNOW UNITREX! *EVERYONE* KNOWS UNITREX!
"*CITY OF THE STARS! BIRTHPLACE OF INTERSTELLAR TRAVEL!*"
AND TECHNICALLY THEY'RE SOMEWHERE *UNDERNEATH* UNITREX. I'LL CROSS-REFERENCE THE TELEPORT COORDINATES WITH MY *IMAGE LIBRARY* AND SEE IF I CAN FIND ANY PICTURES.
OKAY, THE CLOSEST I CAN GET IS A *SURFACE SHOT*—FIVE MILES *ABOVE* WHERE THEY LANDED.
HERE WE... OH.
THEY LOOK AWFULLY *FAMILIAR*.
THERE YOU ARE! YOU HAVEN'T LOST BRAINSTORM'S GUN, HAVE YOU?
NO. NOR HAVE I LOST MY LIFE.
WE CAN'T HAVE YOU LEAVING BEHIND AN *EXPERIMENTAL WEAPON* THAT'S MILLIONS OF YEARS AHEAD OF ITS TIME.
THIS THING? I THOUGHT THIS BELONGED TO WHIRL.
IS THE NAME OF THE GUN ON THE HANDLE? IF IT IS, IT'S ONE OF BRAINSTORM'S.
BY THE CELESTIAL SPIRES—HIS HANDWRITING IS ATROCIOUS.
SPARKEATER GUN

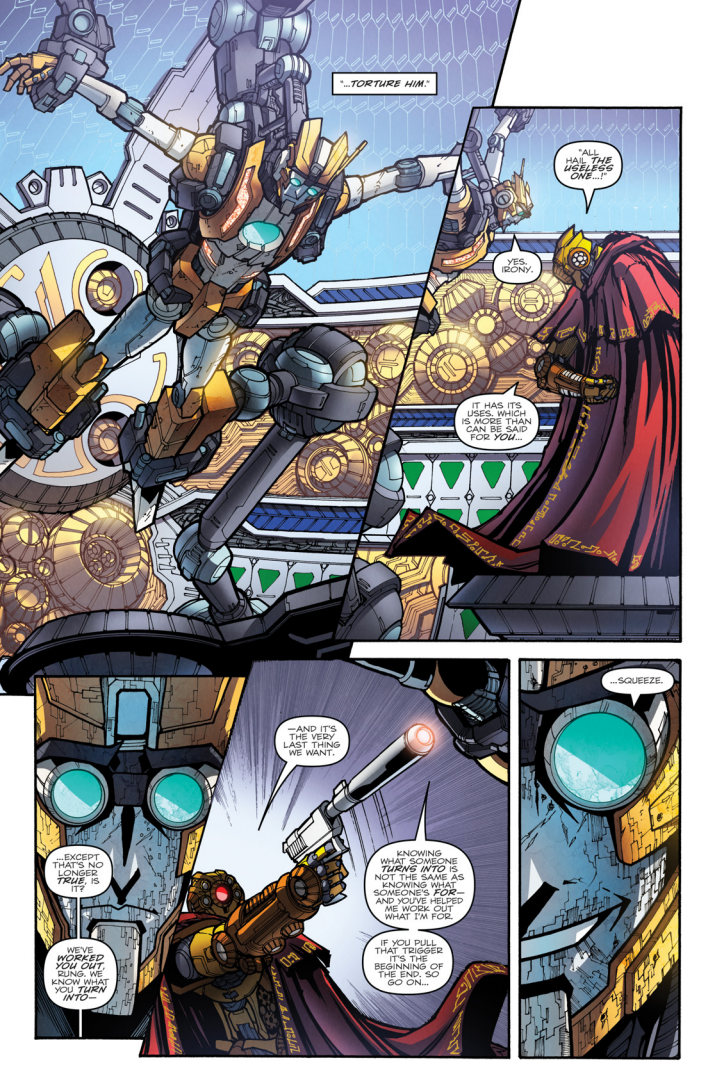

ER—PERCY? IS THE TIME CASE SUPPOSED TO VIBRATE?
FZZZT
WHAT JUST HAPPENED?
EVERYTHING DISAPPEARED! WE'RE STILL HERE— WE'VE LANDED ON SOME KIND OF LAUNCH PAD—BUT YEAH, EVERYTHING ELSE KIND OF... TELEPORTED AWAY.
IT SOUNDS AS IF THE TIME CASE CONTAMINATED THE QUANTUM GENERATOR AND SENT IT INTO THE FUTURE. IF YOU WERE HOLDING THE CASE YOU'D HAVE STAYED PUT.
SO SORRY, WHAT JUST HAPPENED?
WE INVENTED QUANTUM JUMPING. I'LL RUN SOME TESTS AND—
NO, ENOUGH'S ENOUGH...
"...IT'S TIME WE WENT HOME."
BRACE YOURSELVES—BOOMUS SAYS WE'RE ABOUT TO JUMP. EVERYONE READY?
WHERE'S BRAINSTORM? DID WE GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THE DECEPTICON THING?
LOOK, I KNOW I SHOULD BE HELD TO ACCOUNT—I KNOW I'VE GOT THINGS TO ANSWER FOR—BUT I'VE BEEN THINKING, AND I'D REALLY LIKE TO STAY BE—
—HIND.

Elegant CHAOS

EPILOGUE


RUNG/ COME IN...
I'M SUPPOSED TO BE LOCKING UP, BUT THERE'S STILL SO MUCH I WANT TO STUDY.
WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
I'VE BEEN THINKING, PERCEPTOR, AND—
THE FIGHT AT MACADAM'S STARTED AFTER I WAS THROWN ONTO MEGATRON'S TABLE—BUT THAT ONLY HAPPENED BECAUSE WE TRAVELED IN TIME.
SO... SO HOW DID THE FIGHT START ORIGINALLY?
THERE WAS NO "ORIGINALLY."
IT WAS THE ONE THING BRAINSTORM NEVER ALLOWED FOR: THE POSSIBILITY THAT YOU—ALL OF YOU—WERE MEANT TO TRAVEL IN TIME.
SAVING THE SPARKS AT ALYON... THE BABELOM BRAIN... YOU WERE ALWAYS DESTINED TO DO THESE THINGS. BRAINSTORM, TOO—
I SUSPECT THAT HIS ARRIVAL ON MESSATINE DIDN'T COINCIDE WITH THE MASS EVACUATION SO MUCH AS CAUSE IT.
BUT... IF EVERYTHING WE DID WAS PREORDAINED, WHY DID THE TIMELINE START TO COLLAPSE?
ER, YES, WELL... I—
I THINK THAT WAS DOWN TO AN ACCIDENT ON MY PART.
WHEN I TAMPERED WITH THE TIME MACHINE—WHEN I TRIED TO REMOVE THE PARADOX LOCKS—I MOMENTARILY CREATED A MACRO-COSMIC ENVIRONMENT WITHIN WHICH PARALLEL UNIVERSES WERE POSSIBLE.
AND THE OTHER TIMELINE—THE PARALLEL UNIVERSE—DESTROYED?
NOT NECESSARILY—IN FACT NOT ONLY MAY IT HAVE SURVIVED, BUT IT MAY FUNCTION AS A STARTING POINT FOR FURTHER TIMELINES.
JUST THINK, RUNG.
AN INFINITY OF NEW UNIVERSES...
...AND THEY ALL STARTED LIFE IN THAT BRIEFCASE.


POSTSCRIPT
THE FUNCTIONIST UNIVERSE.
HAS HE BEEN MOVED TO SOMEWHERE MORE SECURE?
MORE SECURE? NO, ONE-OF-TWELVE. BUT WE REMOVED HIS TRANSFORMATION COG AS SOON AS WE MADE THE DISCOVERY.
AN ACT OF BLASPHEMY—
—BUT ONE PERMISSIBLE IN EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES SUCH AS THESE.
YOU'VE DONE WELL, QUARK. THE PUZZLE IS SOLVED, THE CODE CRACKED—AND NOT A MOMENT TOO SOON.
YOUR PRAISE IS WELCOME, SIR, BUT MISPLACED: IT'S SWEEP HERE WHO DESERVES THE CREDIT. HE WAS BLESSED WITH A MOMENT OF INSIGHT WHILST CLEANING THE CELL.
HE'S JANITORIAL CLASS, SIR. I WONDERED IF YOU MIGHT POSSIBLY...
BY THE POWER VESTED IN ME BY THE FUNCTIONIST COUNCIL, I HEREBY RECLASSIFY YOU.
YOU ARE NOW ALT MODE EXALTED AND WILL BE VENERATED ACCORDINGLY.
NOW GET BACK TO WORK.
IS OUR GUEST EXPECTING MY VISIT?
HE'S EXPECTING YOU TO DO WHAT YOU'VE DONE EVERY DAY FOR THE LAST TWO MILLION YEARS...


"...TORTURE HIM."
"ALL HAIL THE USELESS ONE...!"
YES, IRONY.
IT HAS ITS USES, WHICH IS MORE THAN CAN BE SAID FOR YOU...
...AND IT'S THE VERY LAST THING WE WANT.
...EXCEPT THAT'S NO LONGER TRUE, IS IT?
KNOWING WHAT SOMEONE TURNS INTO IS NOT THE SAME AS KNOWING WHAT SOMEONE'S FOR— AND YOU'VE HELPED ME WORK OUT WHAT I'M FOR.
WE'VE WORKED YOU OUT, RUNG. WE KNOW WHAT YOU TURN INTO—
IF YOU PULL THAT TRIGGER IT'S THE BEGINNING OF THE END. SO GO ON...
...SQUEEZE.

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #38 COVER B

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by **KEN CHRISTIANSEN**

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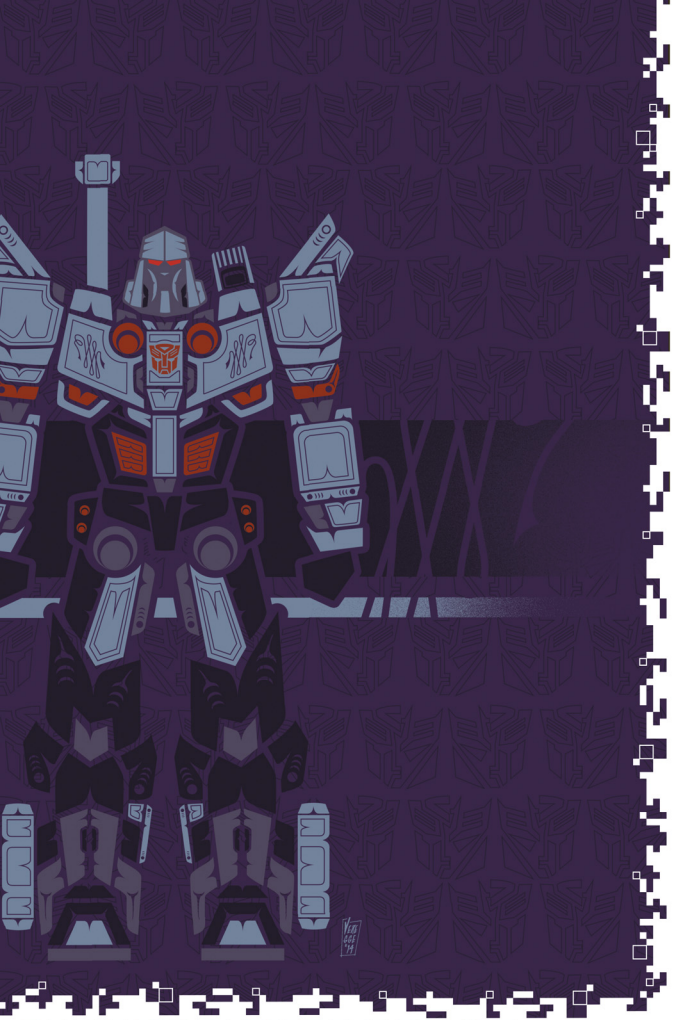

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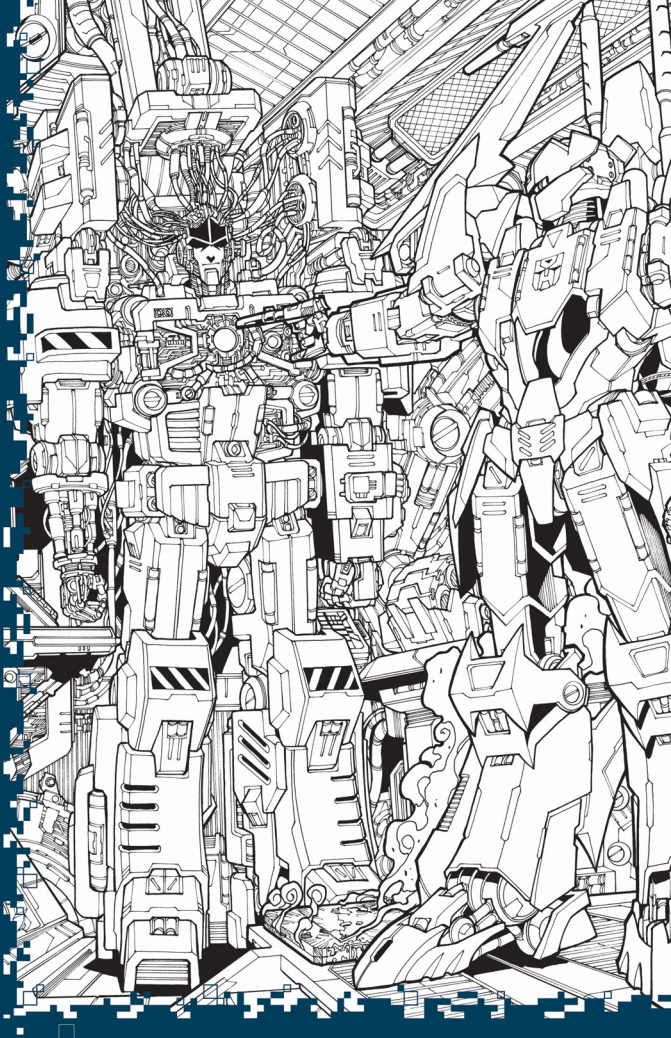

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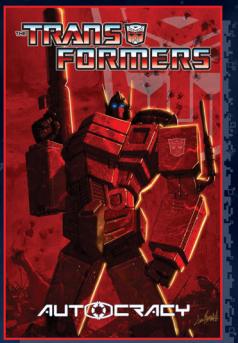

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